

Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
 The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
 Then to your offices and let me rest.

The Fairies sing.

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
 Come not near our fairy queen.
 Philomel, with melody
 Sing in our sweet lullaby;
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:
 Never harm,
 Nor spell nor charm,
 Come our lovely lady nigh;
 So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
 Beetles black, approach not near;
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.
 Philomel, with melody, &c.

A Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:
 One aloof stand sentinel.

[Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.]

Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.

Obe. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
 Do it for thy true love take,
 Love and languish for his sake:
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
 In thy eye that shall appear
 When thou wakest, it is thy dear:
 Wake when some vile thing is near.

[Exit.]

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
 And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
 We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
 And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Her. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
 For I upon this bank will rest my head.

Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
 One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
 Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
 Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
 So that but one heart we can make of it;
 Two bosoms interchain'd with an oath;
 So then two bosoms and a single troth.
 Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
 For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

Her. Lysander riddles very prettily:
 Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
 If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
 Lie further off; in human modesty,
 Such separation as may well be said
 Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
 So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend:
 Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Lys. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
 And then end life when I end loyalty!

Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!

[They sleep.]

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
 But Athenian found I none,
 On whose eyes I might approve
 This flower's force in stirring love.
 Night and silence.—Who is here?
 Weeds of Athens he doth wear;
 This is he, my master said,
 Despised the Athenian maid;
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
 On the dank and dirty ground.
 Pretty soul! she durst not lie
 Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
 All the power this charm doth owe.
 When thou wakest, let love forbid

Sleep his seat on thy eyelid;
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon.

[Exit.]

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running.

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go.

[Exit.]

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;

90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!

100

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [Awaking] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word

Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

110

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent

The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd;

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season:

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;

And touching now the point of human skill,

Reason becomes the marshal to my will

120

And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook

Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?

Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,

That I did never, no, nor never can,

Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,

But you must flout my insufficiency?

Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,

130

In such disdainful manner me to woo.

But fare you well: perforce I must confess

I thought you lord of more true gentleness.

O, that a lady, of one man refused,

Should of another therefore be abused!

[Exit.]

Lys. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there:

And never mayst thou come Lysander near!

For as a surfeit of the sweetest things

The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,

Or as the heresies that men do leave

Are hated most of those they did deceive,

140

So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,

Of all be hated, but the most of me!

And, all my powers, address your love and might

To honour Helen and to be her knight!

[Exit.]

Her. [Awaking] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best

To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!

Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!

Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:

Methought a serpent eat my heart away,

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.

150

Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!

What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?

Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;

Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.

No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:

Either death or you I'll find immediately.

[Exit.]

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The wood. Titania lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that? 11

Snout. By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Star. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bot. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear. 20

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

Bot. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't. 30

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—‘Ladies,—or ‘Fair ladies,—I would wish you,’—or ‘I would request you,’—or ‘I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my

life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are; and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. 41

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement. 51

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and says he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bot. Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper. 62

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK behind.

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,

So near the cradle of the fairy queen?

What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;

An actor too perhaps, if I see cause. 70

Quin. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

Bot. Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—

Quin. Odorous, odorous.

Bot. —odours savours sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,

And by and by I will to thee appear.

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. *[Exit.]*

Flu. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue, 82

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisky juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quin. 'Ninus' tomb; man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once; cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, 'never tire.' 90

Flu. O,—As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.

Bot. If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,

Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,

Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. *[Exit.]*

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afraid. 102

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? *[Exit Snout.]*

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated.

Bot. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. *[Sings.]*

The ousel cock so black of hue, 112

With orange-tawny bill,

The throstle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill,—

Tita. *[Awaking]* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bot. *[Sings]*

The finch, the sparrow and the lark,

The plain-song cuckoo gray,

Whose note full many a man doth mark,

And dares not answer nay;— 120

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:

Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;

And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me

On the first view to say, to swear I love thee.

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion. 132

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go:

Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.

I am a spirit of no common rate:

The summer still doth tend upon my state;

And I do love thee: therefore, go with me; 140

I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,

And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,

And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:

And I will purge thy mortal grossness so

That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED.

Peas. Ready.

Cob. And I.

Moth. And I.

Mus. And I.

All. Where shall we go?

Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;

Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries, 150

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
 The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,
 And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs.
 And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
 To have my love to bed and to arise;
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
 To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
 Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peas. Hail, mortal!

Cob.

Hail!

Moth.

Hail!

Mus.

Hail!

Bot. I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name. 161

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?

Peas. Peaseblossom.

Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir? 170

Mus. Mustardseed.

Bot. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;

And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,

Lamenting some enforced chastity. 180

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.*

Enter OBERON.

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awaked;
 Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
 Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter PUCK.

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit!

What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.

Near to her close and consecrated bower,

While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,

A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,

That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,

Were met together to rehearse a play

Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.

The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,

Who Pyramus presented, in their sport

Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake:

When I did him at this advantage take,

An ass's noll I fixed on his head:

Anon his Thisbe must be answered,

And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,

Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,

Rising and cawing at the gun's report,

Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,

So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;

And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;

He murder cries and help from Athens calls.

Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,

Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;

For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;

Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch. 20

I led them on in this distracted fear,

And left sweet Pyramus translated there:

When in that moment, so it came to pass,

Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.

But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes

With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—

And the Athenian woman by his side;

That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed. 40

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.

Obe. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Her. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50
As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

Dem. So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty:
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Her. What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou drivest me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch! 70
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Dem. You spend your passion on a misprised mood:
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Her. A privilege never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so: 80
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [Exit.]

Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein:
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay. [Lies down and sleeps.]

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90
Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find:
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear:
By some illusion see thou bring her here:
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go; look how I go, 100
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [Exit.]

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band, 110
Helena is here at hand;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?

Obe. Lord, what fools these mortals be!
Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one;
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me 120
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

Lys. I had no judgement when to her I swore.

Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. [Awaking] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! 140
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

Hel. O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:

If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.

Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150

If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;

To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.

You both are rivals, and love Hermia;

And now both rivals, to mock Helena:

A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,

To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes

With your derision! none of noble sort

Would so offend a virgin and extort 160

A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;

For you love Hermia; this you know I know:

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,

In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;

And yours of Helena to me bequeath,

Whom I do love and will do till my death.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:

If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,

And now to Helen is it home return'd,

There to remain.

Lys. Helen, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.

Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense, 180
It pays the hearing double recompense.

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;

Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.

But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Lys. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

Her. What love could press Lysander from my side?

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,

Fair Helena, who more engilds the night

Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know, 190

The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

Her. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

Hel. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.

Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!

Have you conspired, have you with these contrived

To bait me with this foul derision?

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent, 200

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

For parting us,—O, is all forgot?

All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needles created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

Both warbling of one song, both in one key,

As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,

Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,

But yet an union in partition; 210

Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,

Due but to one and crowned with one crest.

And will you rent our ancient love asunder,

To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise.

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.

Hel. Ay, do, perséver, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Hel. O excellent!

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Dem. Quick, come!

Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lys. Away, you Ethiop!

Her. No, no; he'll—

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Dem. Seem to break loose! take on as you would follow,
But yet come not! you are a tame man, go!

Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose, 260
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?
Sweet love,—

Lys. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Her. Do you not jest?

Hel. Yes, sooth; and so do you.

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Dem. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your word.

Lys. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

Her. What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena. 280

Her. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

Hel. Fine, 'i faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?

Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!
Her. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her. 300

Her. Lower! hark, again.
Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further: let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders you?

Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander?

Hel. With Demetrius. 320

Lys. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

Her. "Little" again! nothing but "low" and "little"!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

Dem. You are too officious 330
On her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone: speak not of Helena;
Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

Lys. Now she holds me not;
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Dem. Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:
Nay, go not back.

Hel. I will not trust you, I, 340
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away.

Her. I am amazed, and know not what to say. [Exit.]

Obe. This is thy negligence: still thou mistakest,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise, 350
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;
And so far am I glad it so did sort
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Obe. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way.

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.

When they next wake, all this derision 370
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy:
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger; 380