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A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare

Adapted by Scott Hunter

CAST OF CHARACTERS

People of Athens

XENAPOLYTA, *The Queen of the Amazons*

THESEUS, *Duke of Athens*

EGEUS, *Mother of Hermia*

HERMIA, *in love with Lysander*

LYSANDER, *in love with Hermia*

DEMETRIUS, *also in love with Hermia*

HELENA, *in love with Demetrius*

QUINCE, *a writer and director of plays*

BOTTOM, *the only actor for Pyramus*

FLUTE, *forced to play Thisbe*

SNOUT, *a wall*

SNUG, *slow of study*

STARVELING, *quick to sleep*

QUICKLY, *an actor in a woman's body*

DOGBERRY, *the Captain of the Watch*

MOE, *Second man of the Watch*

PHYL, *a watchperson*

PHILO, *a watchperson*

LOVER MUSE, *come to the big city to perform*

MADMAN MUSE, *come to the big city to perform*

POET MUSE, *come to the big city to perform*

The Forest Fairies

OBERON, *the Mighty King of the Fairies*

TITANIA, *the Queen of the Fairies*

PUCK, *serves Mighty Oberon*

MUSTARDSEED, *Serves Titania*

PEASEBLOSSOM, *Serves Titania*

MOTH, *Serves Titania*

COBWEB, *Serves Titania*

SNAPDRAGON, *Serves Titania*

ROSEBUD, *Serves Titania*

AFFLECK, *Serves Titania*

CHANGELING BOY, *half boy- half fairy*

CHANGELING FAIRIES, *nine of them*

CHANGELING GUMPS, *four of these*

FOREST FARIES, *followers of Titania*

FOREST GUMPS, *followers of Oberon*

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene One: In front of the palace of Duke Theseus, Athens. Four days before the Duke is to be Married to the Queen of the Amazons

*Wherein The Duke sends his Philostrates to find entertainment for the wedding
Egeus brings a complaint against her daughter Hermia and Lysander
The Duke decrees that Hermia must marry Demetrius or die
Hermia and Lysander conspire to elope
Helena cries*

Scene Two: A common house in Athens. Later that same day

Wherein Quince calls together his band of actors to prepare a play for the Duke's nuptials.

Scene Three: The forest outside of Athens. That night

*Wherein the fairy Puck is cornered on enemy turf
Mighty Oberon and his Queen Titania meet by moonlight
Oberon sends Puck to find a magic flower
Oberon takes pity on Helena*

Wherein the Fairies party

*Oberon puts love juice on Titania's eyes
Lysander and Hermia become lost in the woods
Puck lays love juice on Lysander's eyes
Lysander wakes and falls in love*

Wherein Quince's actors practice their play

*Puck transforms Bottom
Titania wakes and falls in love*

INTERMISSION

ACT II

Scene One: Later that night

*Wherein Puck's mistake is revealed
Love juice is placed on the eyes of Demetrius
Two at once woo one*

Wherein Bottom tries to run away

*Oberon removes the spell from Titania
Theseus and his Queen are out for a morning hike
Four lovers are discovered*

Scene Two: A street in Athens. The wedding day

Wherein Bottom returns

Scene Three: The Palace of the Duke. The wedding night

Wherein Quince's players perform "A Tedious Brief Scene of Young Pyramus and His Love Thisbe; Very Tragical Mirth"

A Midsummer Night's Dream

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ACT I - SCENE 1

(The curtain opens on the façade of an ancient Greek palace. Two palace guards, PHILO and PHYL, sleep, standing at their posts. They are two of the four Monty-Pythonesque guards that are collectively known as the PHILOSTRATES. They murmur little snores and chuckle at their own dreams. Suddenly, the Amazon Queen, XENAPOLYTA, leaps out on stage, her sword drawn. She swings her sword and lets out an Amazon Ninja yelp. Duke THESEUS vaults on to the stage his own sword drawn. Their swords cross in a violent fight to the death. PHILO and PHYL continue to sleep. The swords clench for an instant and the characters speak.)

THESEUS

Fair Xenapolyta, our nuptial hour draws near. Four days bring in another moon.

XENAPOLYTA

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night.

(They sword fight again and again clench swords to talk.)

THESEUS

Oh! How slow this old moon wanes.

XENAPOLYTA

Four nights will quickly dream away the time, and then the new moon shall behold the night of our solemnities.

(The fight is on again and THESEUS and XENAPOLYTA fight as they exit. PHYL and PHILO snore. DOGBERRY and MOE enter trotting on hobby horses. They pull back on the reigns and dismount as if they were real horses. DOGBERRY inspects the snoring guards. He blows his whistle. PHYL and PHILO scramble awake and line up at attention.)

DOGBERRY

Are you good men and true?

PHILOSTRATES

Yea,

MOE

Give them their charge, neighbor Dogberry.

DOGBERRY

You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit men for the constable of the watch; therefore bear you your lanterns well. What is afoot?

PHILO

All peaceful here.

PHYL

Nothing happens on our watch.

DOGBERRY

Good. The city is filling up with pick pockets, thieves, revelers, terror mongers and... children, all for the Duke's nuptials.

PHYL

Nuptials?

DOGBERRY

Wedding day.

PHILO

You could've said "Wedding Day."

DOGBERRY

This is your charge: None shall pass. You shall stop all men; in the Duke's name.

MOE

How if a' will not stop? What if he runs away?

DOGBERRY

Why, then, take no note of him, If he will not stop when he is bidden in the name of the Duke, he is obviously none of the Duke's subjects. And you are to meddle with none but the Duke's subjects.

MOE

What if he's a thief?

PHYL

Would he not then be a dishonest man?

PHILO

And we'll arrest him?

DOGBERRY

No. For the less you keep company with dishonest men, why the more is the proof of your own honesty. And we must have a watch that *appears* to be honest.

(very poetically)

I think they that touch pitch... will be defiled.

MOE

Poetically said, Captain.

DOGBERRY

Thank you. To your posts.

PHILOSTRATES

Aye, aye, Captain!

MOE

Only, have a care that your wallets be not stolen.

(THESEUS chases XENAPOLYTA onto the stage swords drawn and battling. The do not see the PHILOSTRATES. They clench swords.)

THESEUS

This waiting lingers my desires.

XENAPOLYTA

Like a dowager long withering out a young man's revenue.

(THESEUS knocks the sword out of XENAPOLYTA's hand. He grabs her hair as if to cut off her head. Instead of killing her, he throws his sword away blindly, and moves in to kiss her. An instant before their lips touch, he notices DOGBERRY and the PHILOSTRATES peeking over his shoulder. THESEUS drops XENAPOLYTA. DOGBERRY blows his whistle and the PHILOSTRATES scramble into action.)

PHYL

Halt. None shall pass in the name of the Duke.

DOGBERRY

This is the Duke and his bride to be.

PHYL

Oh.... Captain, Is it none shall pass or isn't it.

(DOGBERRY blows his whistle and the PHILOSTRATES line up at attention.)

THESEUS *(getting rid of them)*

Go! Philostrates! Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments. Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth!

(He turns back to XENAPOLYTA. The PHILOSTRATES do not go. PHYL raises his hand. THESEUS calls on him like a teacher.)

THESEUS

Yes?

PHYL
The nimble spirit of mirth?

THESEUS
Turn melancholy forth to funerals!

PHILO
To funerals or from funerals?

THESEUS
The pale companion is not for our pomp.

MOE
Oh, pomp.

THESEUS
On your way.

DOGBERRY
As you command, Your Dukeness.

(No one moves.)

THESEUS
What is it?

PHILO
We're a bit unclear on the whole mirth melancholy.

PHYL
Funerals, pomp.

MOE
Merriment thing.

(DOGBERRY pulls THESEUS aside.)

DOGBERRY
Goodmen, sir, but their wits are not so blunt as I would desire they were; Perhaps if you repeated the instructions very slowly. For them.

THESEUS
Find some entertaining plays to perform at our wedding!

PHILO
You could've said, "entertaining plays."

THESEUS

Go!

(The PHILOSTRATES scramble over themselves to get away. THESEUS turns back to find XENAPOLYTA holding both swords. THESEUS grins. She toss him a sword, and they battle again.)

THESEUS

Xenapolyta, I wooed you with my sword, and won your love doing you injuries; but I will wed you in another key,

(XENAPOLYTA disarms THESEUS with a circular stroke of her sword. She holds her point against his throat.)

XENAPOLYTA

Another key?

(She tosses her sword and dips him and moves in for the romantic kill. In the background, EGEUS, a noblewoman, enters and watches. She carries a book with the conspicuous title, The Big Book of Bad Athenian Laws.)

THESEUS

With pomp...,

XENAPOLYTA

With triumph...,

THESEUS

And with...

(An instant before their lips consummate the kiss, EGEUS bursts in between them, interrupting their romance.)

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke.

(XENAPOLYTA drops THESEUS.)

THESEUS

Thanks, good Egeus! What's the news with thee!

EGEUS

I'm full of vexation. I come with complaint against my daughter Hermia.

THESEUS

Perhaps another time, I...

EGEUS

Demetrius!

(She yells off stage and DEMETRIUS enters. DEMETERIUS is a straight laced, establishment type.)

EGEUS

My noble lord, this man hath my consent to marry her.

THESEUS

This man?

(He starts to laugh then realizes they are serious.)

Oh. Congratulations, sir. Now if you will...

EGEUS

Lysander! Stand forth!

(She yells again and LYSANDER enters with HERMIA on his arm. While HERMIA is innocent and sweet she has fallen for LYSANDER, a rebel, every parent's nightmare.)

This man has bewitched the bosom on my child!

(EGEUS sees them arm in arm and leaps to separate LYSANDER and HERMIA.)

HERMIA

Mother!

EGEUS *(in LYSANDER's face)*

Thou! Thou Lysander hast given her rhymes and interchanged love tokens with my child. Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung of love and stolen her fantasies, with bracelets of your hair! Rings, Gawds! Conceits! Trifles. And nose-gays!

ALL

What?

EGEUS

Sweetmeats, the messenger of strong prevalent in unhardened youth.

LYSANDER

I protest. I think.

EGEUS

With cunning thou hast flitched my daughters heart.

(EGEUS turns back to see the Duke sneaking away with XENAPOLYTA. EGEUS runs over and blocks their escape.)

Gracious Duke.

THESEUS

Yes, honest Egeus.

EGEUS

He hath turned her obedience, which is due to me, to stubborn harshness.

THESEUS

And...?

EGEUS

Noble Duke! As she is mine, I may dispose of her. Either she consents to marry Demetrius, or to her death, according to our laws.

THESEUS

Right. "Death."

(EGEUS whips out The Big Book Of Bad Athenian Laws. She shows THESEUS a passage she has marked. He reads. All gather around to read over his shoulder.)

"Death..."

EGEUS

Death!

HERMIA AND LYSANDER

Death?

EGEUS

Death! Immediately provided!

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid, to you, your mother should be a god. Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

THESEUS

In himself he is; but without your Mother's approval, Demetrius must be held the worthier.

HERMIA

I wish my mother could see with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather you must see with her judgment.

HERMIA

I beseech your Grace that I may know the worst that may befall me in this case, if I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS *(reading from the book)*

Either die....

(Everyone nods approvingly.)

or "endure the life of a nun."

(All cringe as if it is worse than death.)

ALL

Aw!

THESEUS

“To live a barren sister all your life. Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.”

ALL

No. Oh. Harsh, etc.

HERMIA

So shall I live, so die, my Lord, ere I will yield my virgin patent up unto his lordship!

DEMETRIUS

Relent, sweet Hermia; and Lysander, yield thy crazed title to what is rightfully mine!

LYSANDER

You have her mother's love, Demetrius. Let me have Hermia's!

EGEUS

Right, he hath my love!

LYSANDER

Then you marry him!

EGEUS

She is mine and all my right of her I do give to Demetrius!

HERMIA

But... But Demetrius made love to Nader's daughter, Helena!

(Everyone looks at DEMETRIUS. He hems and haws.)

DEMETRIUS

Who?

LYSANDER

He won her soul!

HERMIA

Now Helena dotes!

LYSANDER

Devoutly dotes!

HERMIA

Dotes in idolatry!

LYSANDER

Upon this... this spotted man!

(This must be a horrible insult, because DEMETRIUS attacks LYSANDER like a crazy man. They grapple on the floor. EGEUS rushes in and pummels LYSANDER with her book. HERMIA tries to pull DEMETRIUS off of LYSANDER. THESEUS yells.)

THESEUS

Take time to pause!

(All freeze in mid hit.)

By the next new moon, the sealing day between my love and me; upon that day either prepare to die, or else to wed Demetrius...

(XENAPOLYTA steps forward and has an out-of-character, wistful and poetic moment.)

XENAPOLYTA

Earthlier happy is the rose distilled than that which withering on the virgin thorn grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

THESEUS

Took the words right out of my mouth. Come, my Xenapolyta, I must... confer with you.

(They sprint off. The fighters move again. EGEUS runs off after them.)

EGEUS

Death. Immediately provided! It is the law!

DEMETRIUS *(To HERMIA.)*

Yeah, baby.

(LYSANDER and HERMIA throw DEMETRIUS off stage after EGEUS. HERMIA starts to weep.)

LYSANDER

How now, my love. The course of true love never did run smooth; but, either it was different in blood...

HERMIA

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

LYSANDER

Or else misgraffed in respect to years -

HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young!

LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends-

HERMIA

O hell! To choose love by another's eyes!

(LYSANDER maneuvers himself to take advantage of the emotionally vulnerable HERMIA. He stands close behind her and points to the lightning as he speaks of it.)

LYSANDER

Or if there were sympathy in choice, war, death, or sickness did lay siege to it, making it momentary as a sound, swift as a shadow, short as any dream, brief as the lightning in the collied night, that, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth, and ere a man hath the power to say "Behold!" the jaws of darkness do devour it up.

(He tries to kiss her, but she duck out of the way.)

HERMIA

Lysander, please.

LYSANDER *(disappointed)*

So quick bright things come to confusion.

HERMIA

If true lovers have been ever crossed, then let *us* teach poor fancy's followers.

(She pulls out two knives and gives one knife to LYSANDER. She makes him kneel with her and then raises her knife, aimed at her heart, ready to commit Romero & Juliet style suicide. Lysander jumps up.)

LYSANDER

Wait! Hear me, Hermia, I have a wealthy Aunt who lives far away from Athens.

HERMIA

Yes?

LYSANDER

A rich aunt with no child. And she respects me as her only son. There, gentle Hermia, I will marry you, and in that place the sharp Athenian law cannot pursue us. If you lovest me, steal away from your house tomorrow night, and I will wait for you in the woods.

HERMIA

I swear by Cupid's strongest bow, by his best arrows, by all the vows that ever men have broke, tomorrow I will meet with you!

(They hug. HELENA enters behind them unseen. This time they both move in to kiss when HELENA suddenly lets out a wail! The lovers are jolted apart by the sound. HELENA cries dramatically through the entire scene together.)

LYSANDER

Helena!

HERMIA

God speed fair Helena.

HELENA

You call me fair? Demetrius loves your fair. Oh, happy fair! Oh teach me how you look, and with what art you sway Demetrius' heart.

HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still. I give him curses, yet he gives me love! The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

His folly is no fault of mine.

HELENA

None but your beauty; would that fault were mine.

(HELENA falls to the ground sobbing.)

HERMIA

Take comfort, he no more shall see my face.

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold, tomorrow night, through Athens' gate we have devised to steal.

HERMIA

And in the woods, there my Lysander and myself shall meet. Farewell. Pray for us, and good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!

(They exit leaving HELENA. She looks up to make sure she's alone and then her sobbing instantly stops, and she is in crafty woman mode.)

HELENA

Through Athens, I am thought as fair as she. But what of that? Demetrius doesn't think so. He sees me not, being so busy doting on "Hermia's eyes." Things base and vile, holding no quality, love can transpose to form and dignity. Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind; and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind. And therefore is love said to be a child, because in choice he is so oft beguiled. Before Demetrius ever looked on Hermia's eyes, he hailed down oaths that he was only mine.

(She suddenly gets an idea.)

HELENA

I will tell Demetrius of fair Hermia's flight. Then to the woods will he tomorrow night pursue her, and see her for what she is, and if I have thanks for this intelligence I mean to have Demetrius back again.

(Exit.)

ACT I - SCENE 2.

(The façade of the Greek palace turns around to become the quarters of a common laborer in another part of Athens. Five actors enter through the doorway, SNUG, STARVELING, FLUTE, SNOUT, and MISTRESS QUICKLY. QUICKLY is dressed as a man and wears a fake beard and longs to get her chance on stage. STARVELING can barely keep awake and is always a step behind because of it. SNUG is always two steps behind, but not because he is sleepy, because he is slow of study. SNOUT is only slightly more with it than SNUG, and once he starts talking has to be reminded to stop. FLUTE is the youngest of the group and loves to act manly because he always gets the girl's parts. They are part of an acting troop collectively known as THE RUDE MECHANICALS. QUINCE, the playwright, enters from the wings to meet them. He pushes a large trunk with the word "props" written on the side. QUINCE is extremely confident in his own work and has little patience for anyone who tries to stand in his way.)

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

ALL

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night. Line up!

(The players line up across the stage so that QUINCE can inspect the troops. QUICKLY is on the very end. FLUTE is first.)

QUINCE

Francis Flute. I directed you in The Murder of Gonzago.

FLUTE

A glorious play.

QUINCE

Fathers against children,

FLUTE

Uncles marrying the wives of their brothers.

Poison. QUINCE

Italian accents. FLUTE

QUINCE
After your performance, the cows in the fields went dry for two weeks. Such was your power.

(moving on to the next man)
Robin Starvling!

STARVELING
Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE
We've had such times touring together, Starveling?

STARVELING
Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE
We ran in the night from the citizens of Sparta.

STRAVELING
Here Peter Quince.

QUINCE
Pitchforks and torches. How can we forget? Someday we'll return in triumph and ask for our shorts back.

(He moves on to SNUG and SNOUT)
Snug and Snout. Your first play was the Shoes of the Elves.

SNOUT
And I played the right and Snug, you played the left.

SNUG
I thought I was the right.

SNOUT
We crossed out legs

QUINCE
No article of attire had ever been so mastered and the reviewers hoped we'd return for a whole evening of hosiery and...

(He moves on to stand in front of QUICKLY, but can't quite place her.)
And.... You?

Richard Burbage. QUICKLY

We... We.... QUINCE

We played Summer stock in the winter in Oxford and mastered the art of Puppetry in Yorkshire. QUICKLY

Puppetry? QUINCE

We bedeviled the critics in Voosterdam and roasted them on spits and served them with snap peas and Hollandaise sauce. QUICKLY

Critics? QUINCE

We created topiary performance art on the banks of the Thames and sold exercise bicycles at the Parthenon... QUICKLY

Who is this guy! QUINCE

Here Peter Quince. STARVELING

(The other actors shrug and shake their heads. QUINCE leans close to inspect QUICKLY. He pulls QUICKLY'S beard down and lets it snap back up.)

Mistress Quickly? QUINCE

Please, Sir? All I ask is just a small part. That's all I ask for. One or two lines? QUICKLY

No. QUINCE

But I fooled you. You thought I was a boy. QUICKLY

Not me. SNUG

SNOUT

I knew you were a girl.

FLUTE

Likewise. What do you think Starveling?

STAVELING

(sleep talking)

Put another stick on the fire, Mama, cook me some porridge.

FLUTE

See.

QUICKLY

But...

QUINCE

You can tend the props, Mistress Quickly, as usual. That's all.

QUICKLY

Mark my words, there will come a day when women will be allowed to be actors.

(Pause. Then all the men laugh wildly. The door sweeps opens and BOTTOM stand in the frame. He makes a grand entrance. He poses, mid-stage, arms outstretched, until his fellow actors surround him and greet him with praise. QUINCE lingers behind.)

BOTTOM

First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

QUINCE

Marry, our play is, the most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe.

BOTTOM

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

(QUINCE removes a scroll from the prop trunk. BOTTOM walks to the opposite side of the stage from QUINCE and strikes an imposing pose. The other actors run to BOTTOM'S side and strike equally impressive and exaggerated poses.)

QUINCE

Answer as I call you. Nick --

BOTTOM *(interrupting)*

Ready!

(BOTTOM rushes to QUINCE'S side. QUINCE is annoyed but refuses to show it.)

QUINCE

Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOTTOM

Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

BOTTOM *(very dramatic)*

That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure.

(in a lighter mood)

To the rest, yet my chief humour is for a tyrant.

(getting excited)

I could play Ercles rarely!

(He strikes a muscleman pose like Hercules, then snaps into a new excitement.)

Or... a part to tear a cat in.

(He pretends to catch a cat and slowly rip it in half, with appropriate sound effects, of course. BOTTOM suddenly cuts off all emotion and goes into "actor preparation" mode. The others inch forward to see what he is doing. BOTTOM explodes out his trance to overact.)

The raging rocks/ And shivering shocks

Shall break the locks/ Of prison gates;

(BOTTOM pretends to kick in a door. The others jump. Apparently finding a body inside the prison, BOTTOM sinks to his knees to tremble over it. The others inch forward. BOTTOM snaps to point at the sky. The others jump.)

And Phibbus' car / Shall shine from far

And make and mar /

(quietly)

The foolish Fates.

(Bottom pops up, back to being himself.)

This was lofty.

(The others mob BOTTOM and he accepts their praise. He notices QUINCE is aggravated.)

Now name the rest of the players.

(QUINCE raise his scroll and is about to speak when BOTTOM interrupts.)

This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein. A lover is more condoling.

QUINCE (*loud, to shut up BOTTOM*)

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE (*calmer*)

Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisbe? a wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the beauteous lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

QUINCE

You can play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

QUICKLY

I'll do it!

(All laugh. QUINCE takes MISTRESS QUICKLY aside and calmly explains to her.)

QUICKLY

Please?

QUINCE

Let me explain it to you. You would be a girl... pretending to be a boy pretending to be a girl. No one would believe it.

BOTTOM

An I may hide my face, let me play Thisbe too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice.

(as Pyramus)

'Thisne, Thisne;'

(instantly switching directions to play Thisbe in a woman's voice.)

'Ah, Pyramus, lover dear! thy Thisbe dear, and lady dear!'

(He turns his back to the audience and hugs himself so that it looks like he is kissing Pyramus. Pyramus's hands appear to move up and down Thisbe's sides.)

QUINCE (*jolting BOTTOM back to the moment*)

No, no! You must play Pyramus, and, Flute, you Thisbe!

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor.

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, you must play Thisbe's mother....

STARVELING

Ahhhhh.... Okay.

QUINCE

Tom Snout, the tinker.

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince. Tell me what part I am for. I like to play parts in your plays and, in....

QUINCE

Snout! You play Pyramus' father.

SNOUT

What kind of part is a father, is he a gentle person or a common man or am I a landowner like...

QUINCE

Shhh!!! Myself, I play Thisbe's Mother

SNOUT

Do we have a little thing going on...?

QUINCE

Zipeth it!

(SNOUT moves away.)

QUINCE

Snug, the joiner.

(SNUG steps forward)

You play the lion's part.

SNUG

Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

QUINCE

You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

BOTTOM

Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say,

(pretending to be the Duke in voice and doing little golf claps)

“Let him roar again, let him roar again.”

(BOTTOM shuts off instantly and takes in a huge breath. As he prepares to act out a lion, the others creep close. BOTTOM lets out a deafening roar.)

Roar!!!

(The other jump back, frightened. QUINCE attacks BOTTOM verbally.)

QUINCE

An you should do it too terribly! You would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek, and that were enough to hang us all!

ALL

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM *(calmly)*

I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us, but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale....

(He prepares exactly as he did before to play the lion. As he sucks in a huge breath, the other creep near. He lets out a staccato roar.)

“Meow.”

(The others start to jump back frightened, but then realize it was a meow and shrug it off. QUINCE explodes, getting nose to nose with BOTTOM.)

QUINCE

You can play no part but Pyramus!

BOTTOM

Let me play Lion, too!

QUINCE

You can play no part but Pyramus!

BOTTOM

Let me play Lion, too!

QUINCE

You can play no part but Pyramus!

BOTTOM

Let me play Lion, too!

QUINCE

You can play no part but Pyramus!

BOTTOM

Let me play Lion, too!

(At the end they are speaking fast and overlapping words. They both suddenly notice that all the others are watching them and calm themselves. QUINCE is now shaking a little, having gone nearly crazy, on his last thread.)

QUINCE

Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man therefore *you* must needs play Pyramus.

BOTTOM

Well..., I will undertake it.

(MISTRESS QUICKLY brings the shaken QUINCE the scrolls from the prop box. BOTTOM becomes lost in his own thoughts.)

QUINCE

Here are your scrolls....

BOTTOM *(unintentionally interrupting)*

What beard were I best to play it in?

QUINCE *(gritting his teeth)*

Why, what you will. Now each scroll has your part...

BOTTOM *(in his own world)*

I will discharge it in your straw-colour beard.

QUINCE

Yes. *(to others)* Now learn your parts...

BOTTOM

Perhaps your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard.

QUINCE

Yes! Now each...

BOTTOM

Your perfect yellow beard!

QUINCE

Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play bare-faced!!

(QUINCE can no longer control himself. He leaps at BOTTOM to physically attack him. The other players have to hold him back. In a second he calms himself.)

QUINCE

But, masters, here are your parts, and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to learn them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime Mistress Quickly gather the props our play needs. I pray you, fail me not.

BOTTOM

We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously.

(QUINCE breaks free and runs at BOTTOM. QUINCE chases him off the stage and toward the back of the auditorium. The rest of the players try to catch up.)

BOTTOM

Take pains; be perfect, adieu.

(As they run down the isle, they pass PHYL, PHILO, MOE and DOGBERRY passing out fliers to members of the audience and sounding like town criers. The fliers have a headline that reads "Athenian Idol.")

PHYL

Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth.

PHILO

Turn melancholy forth from funerals.

DOGBERRY

One chance for fame and fortune.

MOE

All are welcome to audition. Jugglers, Bear baiters.

DOGBERRY

Poets! Playwrights!

PHYL

Singers!

MOE

Female impersonators.

PHILO

Large monetary endowments for the preferred acts.

(BOTTOM swings around the isle and stops to take one of the fliers. As QUINCE gets near, BOTTOM sprints off. QUINCE and his entourage also pause to take a flier each.)

QUINCE

Oh, thanks.

PHYL

Tell your friends.

(QUINCE suddenly becomes angry again and sprints off after BOTTOM. The entourage follows. The PHILOSTRATES continue to walk through the isle and pass out fliers. They improvise with the audience for exactly how long it takes for the stage crew to change the set from Quince's house to a forest. Mission accomplished, they exit.)

ACT I - SCENE 3

(The forest has an oak tree up center and a grassy knoll up-stage left. Center-stage right is a tall waterfall, which at the moment is dry. PUCK, a mischievous spirit, enters, racing across the stage from right to left. She jams on the brakes like a cartoon roadrunner and pauses before turning back to get a look at the waterfall. She looks around the empty stage to see if the coast is clear. Finding herself alone, she uneasily moves to the waterfall. As she does, from behind her in the deepest part of the stage, FOREST FAIRIES rise up from hiding places behind shrubs and trees. These FOREST FAIRIES are in the service of Queen Titania. PUCK is of the other rival gang, the followers of King Oberon. PUCK seems to sense their presence behind her. She pauses and then swings quickly around. The FOREST FAIRIES dive for cover so she cannot see them. PUCK smiles and turns to the waterfall. She claps two times and the water pours down. PUCK cups her hands and laps up a drink of water. As she does, the FOREST FAIRIES sneak out of hiding and move up right behind her, within inches. PUCK finishes her drink and then claps her hands twice. The waterfall stops. PUCK turns to go and jumps when she sees the FAIRIES right next to her. PUCK tries not to let her fear show.)

PUCK

How now, spirit! whither wander you?

MUSTARDSEED

Over hill, over dale,

PEASEBLOSSOM

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

MOTH

Over park, over pale,

COBWEB

Thorough flood, thorough fire,

AFFLECK

I do wander everywhere,

SNAPDRAGON

Swifter than the moon's sphere;

(PUCK bolts for the exit. The FOREST FAIRIES catch her and hold her prisoner.)

ROSEBUD

I serve the fairy queen, to dew her orbs upon the green.

PEASEBLOSSOM

We must go seek some dewdrops... *(She taps PUCK on the top of the head.)* ...here!

(The FAIRIES lift PUCK up and carry her over to the waterfall. PEASEBLOSSOM claps twice and the water starts. The FAIRIES dunk PUCK'S head under the falls and then release her. Two more claps and it's off. PUCK comes up shaking off the water like a wet dog, raining on all around her and fuming.)

MUSTARDSEED

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; we'll be gone.

(The FAIRIES laugh and start to leave. PUCK is too mad to let them go without a word.)

PUCK

Take heed!

(The FAIRIES come back.)

The king, Mighty Oberon, doth keep his revels here to-night. Take heed the queen come not within his sight;

COBWEB *(mocking)*

Mighty Oberon!

PUCK

Mighty Oberon is passing wrath, because Titania has stolen a lovely changling boy from an Indian king;

ROSEBUD

And Titania never had so sweet a changeling;

PUCK

And jealous.... Mighty Oberon would have the child!

AFFLECK

For a member of his pack, no doubt, to trace the forests wild;

PUCK

But Titania withholds the loved boy,

PEASEBLOSSOM

Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy:

PUCK

And now Titania and Mighty Oberon never meet but they do square off and fight, that all their elves for fear creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

ROSEBUD

Creep into acorn cups?

PUCK

In fear!

MUSTARDSEED

Either I mistake your shape and making quite, or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite call'd Robin Goodfellow.

AFFLECK

Are you he that frights the maidens of the villager?

MOTH

Skims milk?

COBWEB

And Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?

ROSEBUD

Are you not he that the Hobgoblins call sweet Puck?

PUCK

Thou speak'st aright; I am that merry wanderer of the night. I jest to Mighty Oberon and make him smile.

COBWEB (*mimicking PUCK*)

“I jest to Mighty Oberon and make him smile.”

MOTH (*as PUCK*)

“When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, neighing in likeness of a filly foal:”

SNAPDRAGON (*as PUCK*)

“And sometime I lurk in a gossip's cup and when she drinks, against her lips I bob and on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale.”

AFFLECK (*as PUCK*)

“The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale, Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;”

PEASEBLOSSOM (*as PUCK*)

“Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,”

(PEASEBLOSSOM pretends to sit and falls. All the FAIRIES laugh. While they are distracted, PUCK tries to slip away unnoticed, laughing loudly with them. She bolts for the wings but the FAIRIES recover to capture her. They pick her up again and carry her toward the water fall. PUCK yells for help.)

PUCK

Mighty Oberon!

(MIGHTY OBERON, the powerful king of the forest, leaps on stage from behind the waterfall. He is followed by his gang, the FOREST GUMPS. They are even less intelligent than you might think from their name, and they wear costumes made out of the hides of stuffed animals; stuffed animals being the only kind of animal they can catch. OBERON leads them in a fierce display of power. They growl and take weightlifter poses, showing off their muscles to the audience. The FOREST FAIRIES drop PUCK, scream, and hide stage left in fear. PUCK runs to join MIGHTY OBERON and his posers. Suddenly, TITANIA, the Queen of the Fairies, enters from behind. She watches OBERON and his followers continue to roar and pose to the audience. The FOREST GUMPS notice her first and run for cover behind the waterfall. TITANIA walks up directly behind MIGHTY OBERON who is still making menacing poses. PUCK taps OBERON on the shoulder and nods toward TITANIA.)

OBERON

She’s right behind me, isn’t she?

(PUCK nods. OBERON turns and sees her and jumps in fear. He collects himself and puts on a mighty air.)

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What? Jealous, Oberon?

(The fairies giggle from their hiding places.)

Fairies, skip hence.

(TITANIA motions for FOREST FAIRIES to come out. OBERON motions for his FOREST GUMPS to come out of hiding, too. TITANIA steaks to her fairies, letting them in on her secret.)

TITANIA

I have forsworn his bed and company.

FAIRIES

Oh! Go girl, etc.

(The FOREST FARIES laugh. Even the FOREST GUMPS laugh. TITANIA “high fives” with her followers. OBERON interrupts their celebration.)

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton! Am I not thy lord? Ohhhh!

(OBERON turns back to “high five” with his GUMPS. They just stare at him, leaving his hand hanging in the air.)

TITANIA *(very sweetly)*

Then I must be thy lady;

(She suddenly gets very angry and in OBERON’S face. She drives him backward as she scolds.)

But I know when thou hast stolen away from fairyland and in the shape of Corin sat all day, playing pipes of corn and versing love to amorous Xenapolyta! Why art thou here? but that the bouncing Amazon, your mistress and your warrior love, to Theseus must be wed, and you come to give *their* bed joy and prosperity?

(She gives him a “talk to the hand,” and struts back to join her equally angry FAIRIES.)

OBERON

For shame Titania. How can you glance at my credit for Xenapolyta knowing I know of your love for Theseus.

(The FOREST FAIRIES get interested.)

Did you not lead him through the glimmering night?

TITANIA

These are forgeries of jealousy! And never...!

(The FAIRIES lean in close to question TITANIA’S story with a stare.)

TITANIA *(qualifying her answer)*

...since the middle summer's spring...

FAIRIES

Ah.

TITANIA

(Growing more and more romantic with each new place she list, until at the end of the line she is staring out into space reaching and remembering.)

... met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead, to dance our ringlet to the whistling wind.

(TITANIA and all the FAIRIES sigh.)

OBERON *(exploding)*

Why should Titania cross her Oberon? I do but beg a little changeling boy to be my henchman!

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest. The fairyland buys not the child of me.

(The FAIRIES bring int the CHANGLING BOY. He resembles Elvis and is pimped out with bling bling. All the FAIRIES fawn over him, like he's Adonis.)

CHANGLING BOY

Thank you. Thank you very much. My mother was a vortress in her order, but she, being mortal, died when she gave birth to me. Oh mama.

(The FAIRIES weep and sigh for him.)

CHANGLING BOY

But I try to go on the very very best I can.

TITANIA

For the mother's sake do I rear up her boy and for her sake I will not part with him.

CHANGLING BOY

That's right.

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA *(sweetly)*

Perchance 'till *Theseus'* wedding day.

(The girls giggle at the word "Theseus." TITANIA turns stern.)

If you will patiently dance in our round and see our moonlight revels, go with us. If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts!

OBERON

Give me the boy and I will go with you.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies away!

(TITANIA exits in triumph with the CHANGLING BOY. The FOREST FAIRIES run in all directions, scaring off the FOREST GUMPS as they go and leaving OBERON and PUCK on stage alone.)

OBERON

Well go thy way. Thou shall not leave this wood until I torment you for this injury. Gentle Puck, come here. Do you remember how once I sat upon a promontory and heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath that the rude sea grew civil at her song, and certain stars shot madly from their sphere to hear the sea-maid's music?

PUCK (*pretending to remember*)

I remember.

OBERON

That very time I saw, flying between moon and earth, Cupid.

PUCK

Cupid?

OBERON

Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took, and loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow, as it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts. Marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell. It fell upon a little Western Flower.

PUCK

A flower.

OBERON

Before, milk-white, now purple with love's wound.

PUCK

Purple.

OBERON

Fetch me that flower! The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid, will make man or woman madly love the next live creature that it sees.

PUCK

Madly love the next live creature!

OBERON

Having once this juice, I'll watch Titania when she is asleep and drop the liquor of it in her eyes. The next thing she looks upon, be it lion!

(The next few lines and bits are quick and overlapping.)

PUCK (*acting out roaring like a lion*)

Lion!

OBERON

Or wolf!

PUCK (*howling*)

Wolf!

OBERON

Or bull!

(OBERON pantomimes a matador's cape as PUCK charges like a bull.)

PUCK

Bull!

OBERON

Or ape!

(The overlapping bits end for this extended bit, PUCK makes monkey sounds and hops around the stage. OBERON shakes his head and wonders what he did to deserve such a follower. PUCK pretends to throw pooh at OBERON and then realizes the bit has gone on too long.)

PUCK

Or ape.

OBERON

She shall pursue it with the soul of love. Fetch me that herb!

PUCK

I will put a girdle around the earth.

(PUCK zips off stage.)

OBERON

And before I take this charm from off Titania's sight, as I can do with another herb, I'll make her give me the Changeling Boy.

(He hears a noise off stage.)

But who comes here? I will disguise myself as a tree.

(OBERON stands center, limbs out like a tree. DEMETRIUS enters chased by HELENA.)

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not! Where is Lysander and Hermia. The one I'll slay! The other slayeth me. Thou toldest me they were stolen unto this wood. And here I am.

(HELENA hugs him. He breaks free and runs to the tree, OBERON, and makes sure it's between HELENA and himself.)

Get thee hence and follow me not.

HELENA

You hard hearted adamant.

(She lunges for him and they switch sides of OBERON.)

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? Do I say you're fair? I tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you!

HELENA

And even for that I do love you more.

(She lunges for him again and they switch sides.)

HELENA

I am your spaniel Demetrius. The more you beat me, the more I fawn on you. Use me but as your spaniel. Spurn me, strike me, neglect me, lose me, only give me leave, unworthy as I am, to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

I am sick when I do look on thee.

(He sticks his head around the tree to admonish her. OBERON takes the opportunity to slap DEMETRIUS' face. OBERON then snaps back into being a tree.)

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

I will run from thee and leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts!

HELENA

The wildest beast hath not such a heart as you!

(She lunges and catches him.)

DEMETRIUS

Let me go!

(He bucks her down and then runs off stage.)

HELENA

I will follow you and make a heaven of hell!

(She gets up and chases him out. OBERON stops being a tree.)

OBERON

Fare thee well, nymph.... Ere he do leave this wood, he shall seek thy love.

(PUCK enters running. She passes up OBERON, throws on the roadrunner brakes, and then backs up to OBERON.)

OBERON

Hast thou the flower?

PUCK

Aye! There it is.

OBERON

Give it to me. I know a bank where the wild thyme blows, there sleeps Titania sometime of the night. And with the juice of this, I'll streak her eyes and make her full of hateful fantasies.

(He gives a bit of the flower to PUCK.)

Puck, take thou some and seek through this grove, a sweet Athenian lady in love with a disdainful man.

(PUCK isn't listening much and is about to spread the love juice on her own eyes just to try it out.)

Anoint *his* eyes, but do it when the next thing he sees may be the lady. Thou shall know the man by his Athenian garments he has on. Effect it with some care so that he may prove more fond of her than she upon her love.

PUCK

Fear not, my Lord, your servant shall do so!

(PUCK hurries off. OBERON hears the FOREST FAIRIES approaching and hides behind the waterfall. TITANIA enters surrounded by her frolicking FAIRIES. She clearly hates the song they sing by her scowl and the way she holds her head.)

AIRIES

87 buttercups of mead on the wall, 87 buttercups of mead, you take one down and pass it around, 86 buttercups of mead on the wall, 86 buttercups of mead on the wall....

TITANIA

Come now!

(The FAIRIES freeze, mid lyric.)

A roundel and a fairy song. Sing me now asleep. Then to your offices, and let me rest.

(The FAIRIES hum a lullaby and lead TITANIA to her up-stage left, raise grassy bower. TITANIA lies down and closes her eyes. The FAIRIES shush themselves. PEASEBLOSSOM sneaks up to TITANIA and pokes her to make sure she is asleep. TITANIA snores loudly.)

PEASEBLOSSOM

Party!

(Fast music begins. The FAIRIES dance a choreographed, Lord of the Dance type dance. Soon the FOREST GUMPS appear in the clearing to dance their own separate choreography. The FAIRIES break ranks and chase the FOREST GUMPS off stage. The music continues as QUINCE and the RUDE MECHANICALS push the large prop trunk across the stage. Standing atop the rolling trunk, BOTTOM points forward, like Washington crossing the Delaware. As they are about to exit, crossing the other direction are three women dressed in white robes, THE MUSES. They carry Athenian Idol flyers and eagerly head towards Athens. Simultaneously crossing behind them but in the opposite direction, XENAPOLYTA and THESEUS

sword fight across the stage. They are followed by EGEUS holding up her Big Book of Bad Athenian Laws and demanding justice, then by DOGBERRY and his PHILOSTRATES. Next, DEMETRIUS crosses opposite with HELENA riding on his back. The GUMPS and FAIRIES reenter, led by the CHANGLING BOY, and dance a combined choreography until the music ends and they all pose triumphantly. They hold the pose until the applause ends and it is quiet, then TITANIA snores once loudly. The FAIRIES run off with the GUMPS leaving only the CHANGLING FAIRIES and the CHANGLING GUMPS on stage alone. These are the youngest of the GUMPS and FAIRIES, sometimes known as the Freshman. They huddle scared and bewildered in two distinct groups.)

What do we do now?
CHANGELING FAIRIE 1

I don't know.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 2

I'm scared.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 8

I should've stayed in my crib and not run off with the first fairy that recruited me.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 10

Seems like only yesterday, I was a happy child.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 6

We knew what was expected.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 5

Now, we're all alone with no parents to guide us.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 3

I want to go home.
ALL

Wait! We could each capture a Changeling Gump.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 9

Ooh, Icky Capture a Gump, etc.
ALL

I think that's what's expected of us.
CHANGELING FAIRIE 7

Catch it and do what with it?
CHANGELING FAIRIE 4

CHANGELING FAIRIE 3
Do we have to do something with it?

CHANGELING FAIRIE 1
I think it's required.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 5
We could... we could make it our slave.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 6
I like that idea.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 4
Make it fetch.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 7
Roll over!

CHANGELING FAIRIE 2
Bring us our slippers and newspaper.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 1
That's a dog, not a Gump.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 8
What do Gumps do?

CHANGELING FAIRIE 10
Let's catch one and find out.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 7
Who's first?

CHANGELING FAIRIE 8
Not me.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 9
I'll go first.

ALL
No, stop. Don't. Oooohh, etc.

(CHANGELING FAIRIE 9 approaches the CHANGLING GUMPS. They cower in fear. She inspects the fidgeting, nerdish, clump of Gumps and picks out a likely target.)

CHANGELING FAIRIE 9
You. What's your name?

CHANGELING GUMP 1
 Changeling Squeak.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 9
 You're mine.

CHANGELING GUMP 1
 Okay. Just let me get my fanny-pack.

CHANGELING FAIRIE 9
 You're wearing it. Come with me.

CHANGELING GUMP 1
 What are we going to do?

CHANGELING FAIRIE 9
 Whatever I want.

CHANGELING GUMP 1
 Okay. Maybe, I could factor your quadratic polynomials and you could factor mine.

(She grabs his arm to lead him off. The mere touch of a FAIRIE makes CHANGELING GUMP 1 quiver and then faint dead away. The emboldened CHANGLING FAIRIES chase off the other CHANGLING GUMPS who run away in fear as CHANGELING FAIRIE 9 grabs her trophy by the foot and drags him off stage. When the stage is empty, MIGHTY OBERON sneaks out of hiding and approaches the sleeping TITANIA. He puts the love juice into her eyes.)

OBERON
 What thou seest when thou dost wake, do it for thy true-love take; Love and languish for his sake. Be it bird or cat or bear, mouse or boar with bristled hair in thy eye that shall appear when thy wakest, it is thy dear. Wake when some vile thing is near.

(OBERON exits. In a moment, LYSANDER enters studying a road map. He stops center stage and looks around. He appears to be lost. A moment later HERMIA enters. She is weighed down and piled high with all the couple's luggage and staggers to walk. LYSANDER continues to study the map as she shuffles on. Finally she lets go of all the luggage and it crashes to the ground. LYSANDER looks up, curious.)

LYSANDER
 Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood. And to speak the truth, I have forgot our way.

(with a sudden ulterior motive in his voice)
 We'll... rest here if you think it good and wait for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA
 Find yourself a bed, for I upon this bank will rest.

(HERMIA tosses him his sleeping bag, then picks up her own pink Princess sleeping bag and kneels to spread it on the ground stage left. LYSANDER tosses his bag away. He claps his hands and Barry White type music fills the air. Hermia looks up from her kneeling position at the strangeness of the music. LYSANDER slinks in for the romantic kill.)

LYSANDER

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

(He dives at her, but she jumps up and out of the way. His momentum makes him body surf stage left on the pink Princess sleeping bag. HERMIA claps and the music cuts short.)

HERMIA

Nay! Good Lysander, for my sake, my dear, lie further off.

LYSANDER *(innocently)*

O, my innocence. I mean that my *heart* to yours is knit so that but one *heart* we can make of it.

(starting to get over heated again)

Two... bosoms interchanged with an oath.

(He claps and the music restarts.)

Then by your side no bed-room me deny!

(HERMIA claps off the music.)

HERMIA

For love and courtesy lie farther off!

LYSANDER

For lying so I do not lie!

(She ushers him all the way stage right and gives him his discarded sleeping bag again.)

HERMIA

Such separation becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid. And good night, sweet friend, thy love never alter till thy sweet life end.

(Returned now to stage left, she blows him a kiss. He eagerly claps on the music and she just as quickly claps it off. She gives him the evil eye and points for him to stay on his side of the stage.)

LYSANDER

Amen, amen. Here is my bed. Sleep give thee all his rest!

(HERMIA climbs in her pink Princess sleeping bag and zips up. LYSANDER pouts and uses his for a pillow. They sleep. PUCK runs in, stops like a roadrunner and tries to catch her breath.)

PUCK

Through the forest I have gone, but Athenian found I none on whose eyes I might approve this flower's force in stirring love.

(She starts to run again but trips over LYSANDER.)

Who is here? This is he! And here the maiden, sleeping sound.

(She gets out her flower and wipes the Love Juice on LYSANDERS sleeping eyelids.)

Upon thy eyes I throw all the power this charm doth owe. When thou wakest, let love forbid sleep his seat on thy eyelid.

(She rises to go.)

So awake when I am gone for I must now to Mighty Oberon.

(PUCK exits. Enter DEMETRIUS dragging HELENA who has clamped onto his leg.)

HELENA

Stay though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS

I charge thee hence and do not haunt me thus!

HELENA

O, wilt thou leave me! Do not so!

DEMETRIUS

Stay on thy peril! I alone will go.

(He shakes her off and sprints off stage, leaving HELENA in a heap.)

HELENA

I am out of breath in this fond chase. The more my prayer, the lesser my grace. Happy is Hermia wherever she lie, for she has blessed and attractive eyes. No! No! I am a bear, for beasts that meet me run away in fear.

(LYSANDER moans.)

But who is here? Lysander, on the ground? Dead, or asleep? I see no blood, no wound. Lysander. If you live awake.

(She lightly slaps him to wake him up. LYSANDER awakes and instantly falls in love with HELENA.)

LYSANDER

And run through fire for thy sweet sake! Transparent Helena! Nature shows art, that through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

(He pursues her and she backs up.)

HELENA

No. Do not say so. Hermia loves you. Be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia? No! I do repent the tedious minutes I have spent with her. Not Hermia, but Helena I love!

(She ducks under his attempt to hug her and spins around facing him.)

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born? When at your hands did I deserve this scorn? Isn't it enough, Isn't it enough that I did never, no nor never can deserve a sweet look from Demetrius, but you must flout my insufficiency! Good troth you do me wrong!

(She slaps him. That just makes him happier.)

LYSANDER

My love.

HELENA

I thought you of more true gentleness. Oh, that a lady of one man refused, should of another be abused!

(She turns and runs off, LYSANDER chasing her. HERMIA talks through a nightmare.)

HERMIA

Help me, Lysander! help me! Do thy best to pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!

(She vaults up, awake.)

Aye me, what a dream. Lysander, look how I do shake with fear. Methought a serpent ate my heart away and you sat smiling at his cruel prey...

(She notices LYSANDER is missing.)

Lysander? Lysander! Where are you? Speak if you can hear. No? Either death or you I will find immediately.

(She stands, still in her sleeping bag, and hops off stage.. The CHANGELING GUMPS enter after a hard night of factoring.)

CHANGELING GUMP 2

Wow, who would've thought factoring polynomials could've been so much fun.

CHANGELING GUMP 3

I don't know. I had to teach mine everything.

CHANGELING GUMP 4

Really. I don't want to brag but... We factored two X cubed, plus nine X squared, minus eleven X, minus sixty.

CHANGELING GUMP 1

High five.

(CHANGELING GUMP 3 freezes when he sees the suitcases and sleeping bag left behind by the lovers.)

Wait... Prey!
CHANGELING GUMP 3

What?
CHANGELING GUMP 2

Prey.
CHANGELING GUMP 3

(the CHANGELING GUMPS drop to their knees, bow their heads and put their hands palm to palm.)

Not that kind of pray. P-- R--E--Y
CHANGELING GUMP 3

(He points at the suitcases.)

I'm scared.
HANGELING GUMP 4

(CHANGELING GUMP 2 slaps him.)

Thanks. I needed that.
CHANGELING GUMP 4

Let's get 'em!
CHANGELING GUMP 2

(They attack the suitcases and sleeping bag left behind by LYSANDER and HERMIA. It's as if they are fighting vicious wild animals. CHANGELING GUMP1 wraps himself up in LYSANDER'S sleeping bag and can't get out.)

Help me! Help!
CHANGELING GUMP 1

(The other GUMPS start to run away.)

Wait. We're not going to leave a gump behind on my watch.
CHANGELING GUMP 3

(The GUMPS charge back and overpower the sleeping bag and the suitcases and take them prisoner. They help CHANGELING GUMP 1 off stage like a wounded Marine. In a moment, enter QUINCE. He studies the grassy clearing, then kneels down to feel the quality of the dirt, as if it is a Holy Shrine.)

BOTTOM (*off stage*)

Green light.

(BOTTOM enters, riding atop the rolling prop trunk. The weary RUDE MECHANICALS push it. STARVLING is not with them.)

BOTTOM

Red light.

(The RUDE MECHANICALS jerk the trunk to a stop.)

Green light.

(They go.)

Red light.

(They stop.)

Red light.

(They anticipate go, then fall all over themselves to re-stop.)

QUINCE

Here's a marvelous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage. We will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

BOTTOM

Quince!

QUINCE

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

BOTTOM

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword and kill himself; which the ladies can't abide.

SNUG

By larkin, a parlous fear.

QUICKLY

The long and short of it, we can watch whatever a man can.

(The rest look at her, wait a beat, and then laugh.)

SNOUT

I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done. They might think we're...

QUINCE

Shh. I propose that we --

BOTTOM

I have a device to make all well.

(The RUDE MECHANICALS turn their attention away from Quince and gather around BOTTOM.)

BOTTOM

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 more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom, the weaver!

(All but QUINCE applaud. BOTTOM accepts their praise.)

This will put them out of fear.

(The RUDE MECHANICALS move to surround QUINCE and plead with their eyes that he might make the change.)

QUINCE

Well... we will have such a prologue.

SNUG

Will not the ladies be afeared of the Lion?

SNOUT

I fear it, I promise you. A lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing.

SNUG

Another prologue must tell I am not a lion.

BOTTOM

Nay! You must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak saying thus, "Ladies" or "Fair ladies I would wish you,"

QUINCE

It shall be so. Now...

BOTTOM

Or "I would request you,"

QUINCE

It shall be so. Now...

BOTTOM

Or "I would entreat you - not to fear. Not to tremble. If you think I come here as a lion, it were a pity on my life.

(growing in emotion)

No! I am no such thing!

QUINCE

It shall be so. Now...

BOTTOM

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!

SNUG

Snug the joiner!

QUINCE (*exploding*)

It shall be so!

(He calms himself.)

Now, there is two hard things, Mistress Quickly, report.

QUICKLY

One. That is to bring moonlight into the theater, for, you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight. Someone must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern and say he comes to present the person of moonshine.

(She opens the prop trunk and produces a lantern and a thorn bush.)

QUINCE

But who?

(Everyone thinks. QUICKLY strikes a pose like the moon)

QUICKLY

Rays of light beam down on our pair of lovers. Like a woman's beaming eyeballs. Would not even need any lines at all.

QUINCE

Please! We're trying to think.

(They think. QUICKLY speaks out of the side of her mouth in a manly voice.)

QUICKLY

Let the girl play the moon.

(QUINCE suddenly gets an idea.)

QUINCE

I've got it! It has come to me.

(QUINCE leads everyone to the prop box. They open the trunk and lift out STARVLING, who has apparently been sleeping inside this whole time. They stand him up and prop the lantern and thorn bush in his hands. He mumbles in his sleep.)

STARVELING

Here Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Good. Well played, Robin Starveling.

(They let go of him, and STARVLING crashes to the floor, asleep.)

QUINCE

Now, there is another thing. Quickly, report.

QUICKLY

We must have a wall, for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through a hole or chink in a wall.

SNUG

That's a hard one. Walls are heavy.

QUICKLY

Some *person* may portray a wall. We wouldn't even need to see her... I mean *his* face.

SNUG

That's a hard one. Walls are heavy.

SNOUT

You can never bring in a Wall. We could bring in some brick and mortar, but how would we change the scene to...

(QUINCE shoots him a "stop talking" look. SNUG turns to BOTTOM.)

What say you, Bottom?

(The RUDE MECHANICALS, except STARVLING who sleeps and QUINCE who boils, gather around BOTTOM.)

BOTTOM

Some one or other must present wall.

(BOTTOM pulls SNOUT forward and positions him like the wall. He moves SNOUT'S arm up, chest high, and positions his fingers so that there is a circular hole formed with his thumb and first finger.)

And have him have some plaster or some roughcast about him to signify wall. And let him hold his fingers thus; and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper. Chink.

SNOUT

Chink.

QUINCE *(crazy angry)*

Sit down! Rehearse your parts! Pyramus. Enter stage right. You begin! Quickly mind the script! Speak your speeches according to your cues!

(PUCK enters and observes the ranting.)

Thisbe! You can not be on the same side of the wall as Pyramus! Lion! Behind the rock!

(The actors scramble to their places. BOTTOM struts off stage right.)

PUCK

What homespuns have we swaggering here, so near the cradle of the fairy queen? What? A play!

(PUCK sits down to watch and be entertained.)

SNOUT

Chink.

QUINCE

Speak, Pyramus! Thisbe. Stand forth.

(BOTTOM enters, over dramatically.)

BOTTOM

Thisbe, the flowers of odious savors sweet....

QUICKLY

Odorous.

QUINCE

Odorous! Odorous!

BOTTOM

Odors savors sweet, so hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear. But hark! A voice!

PUCK

A stranger Pyramus than ever played. This is no entertainment.... Unless...

(PUCK gets an idea.)

QUINCE

Cut.... You cannot say "Hark" until you hear the voice.

BOTTOM

She didn't speak.

FLUTE

Must I speak now?

QUICKLY

Aye, marry, you must;

FLUTE

Oh.

QUICKLY

For you must understand, he goes but to see a noise he *heard!*

FLUTE

Most radiant Pyramus,

QUINCE

Not yet! We must do the whole thing again. Places. Places!

(BOTTOM exits right, followed by PUCK. QUICKLY positions FLUTE for her entrance. QUINCE tugs at his hair. SNOUT approaches QUINCE.)

SNOUT

What's my motivation, because I'm having a little trouble finding my character.

QUINCE

You're a wall.

SNOUT

Yeah.... Do you think the chink should be here?

(He holds up the chink chest high.)

Or maybe here?

(He move the chink a tiny bit out from his body.)

Or perhaps it would best serve the character if it were...?

(QUINCE violently grabs SNOUT'S wrist, twists his hand so his fingers are pointing at his face, and pokes SNOUT in the eyes with SNOUT'S own index and middle fingers.)

QUINCE *(calmly)*

Right there is best.

QUICKLY

Places! And... action.

(FLUTE approaches the wall.)

FLUTE

Most radiant Pyramus. Most lily white of hue. As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire, I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at old Ninny's tomb.

QUICKLY

Ninus tomb.

QUINCE

Ninus tomb!

QUICKLY

But he must not speak that yet. That is Thisbe's answer to Pyramus.

QUINCE

You speak all your part at once, cues and all! Pyramus, enter!

(BOTTOM does not enter, but a bright light flashes off stage.)

Your cue is past, Bottom; it is NEVER TIRE! Again! From the beginning!

FLUTE

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

(BOTTOM enters followed by PUCK. The head of a donkey replaces his human features.)

BOTTOM

If I were fair, Thisbe, I were only thine.

QUINCE

Monstrous! O strange! Pray, master! Fly! Help!

BOTTOM

Why do they run away? This is a knavery to make me afraid.

SNUG

O Bottom, thou art changed! What do I see on thee!

BOTTOM

What do you see?

SNOUT

Thou art translated!

(They throw STARVLING into the prop trunk and push off the trunk, screaming in fear the whole way.)

BOTTOM

I see their knavery. This is to make an ass out of me, to fright me, if they could. I shall sing that they shall hear I am not afraid. "The woosel cock so black of hue, with orange tawny bill, the throstle with his note so true, the wren with little quill."

(He sings and dances. His racket wakes up TITANIA from her sleep.)

TITANIA

What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

(She sees BOTTOM prancing about and instantly falls in love with him.)

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. Mine ear is much enamored of thy note. So is mine eye enthralled by your shape. And thy fair virtue doth move me, on first sight, to say, to swear, I love you.

BOTTOM

Yeah... Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now days.

TITANIA

Thou art as wise as you are beautiful.

BOTTOM

Not so. But if I have wit enough to get out of this wood.

(He starts to run away, but she freezes his feet so he cannot escape. He struggles to pull up his feet as she moves in and toys with him.)

TITANIA

Out of this wood do not desire to go. Thou shalt remain here, whether you wilt or not. I am no common spirit and I do love thee. Therefore go with me. I will give you faries to attend on thee. They shall fetch thee jewels and sing while you sleep.

BOTTOM

Jewels?

(He stops struggling and for the first seems to like the idea.)

TITANIA

I will purge thy mortal grossness. Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed! Fairies, skip hence!

(The FOREST FAIRIES pop up from behind the shrubbery as if caught. The FOREST GUMPS also pop up and run off stage in fear. The FARIES approach cautiously, expecting to be in trouble.)

MOTH

Ready!

FARIES

And I.

MUSTARDSEED

What shall your majesty demand, we will do.

TITANIA

Be kind to this courteous gentleman.

PEASEBLOSSOM

What?

AFFLECK

If you please, where is the gentleman to whom you refer?

TITANIA

This quintessential form. This Apollo.

COBWEB

With all do respect there is no Apollo here.

ROSEBUD

A being there is.

SNAPDRAGON

But one who appears to be an ass....

(TITANIA shoots her a "be careful" look.)

Ass-toundingly handsome mortal.

TITANIA

Feed him with apricots and dewberries.

MOTH

Pardon?

TITANIA

Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

ALL

Oh.

(They reluctantly kneel to hail the mortal.)

MUSTARDSEED

Salute the mortal, fairies, as your queen commands.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Hail mortal!

AFFLECK

Hail Mortal.

ROSEBUD

Hail Mortal.

COBWEB

Hail Mortal.

ALL FAIRIES

Hail Mortal.

BOTTOM

Hail, yes!

MUSTARDSEED

What is your request of us?

BOTTOM

Mercy. Pinch me that I may know I sleep not.

MUSTARDSEED

As you wish.

(The FOREST FAIRIES all pinch him. He writhes in pain.)

BOTTOM

Stop. No. That Tickles. Stop! .

ROSEBUD

You seem displeased.

BOTTOM

No! Heartily. I will be more careful next time. I beseech your names that I may command you individually.

(Answering quickly and overlapping.)

COBWEB

Cobweb.

MOTH

Moth.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Peaseblossom.

MUSTARDSEED

Mustardseed.

ROSEBUD

Rosebud.

BOTTOM

Slow down.

(They speak in slow motion.)

SNAPDRAGON

Snapdragon.

AFFLECK

Affleck.

BOTTOM

I shall desire more of your acquaintances.

TITANIA

Come. Lead him to my bower.

(The FOREST FAIRIES rise and protest that the bower is no place for this one. TITANIA is firm.)

TITANIA

Lead him to my bower!

(TITANIA unfreezes his feet. The FAIRIES lift him up and carry him off stage as if he just won the football game. He flirts with the FAIRIES as he goes. TITANIA lingers on stage to speak to the moon. PUCK stays with her, hiding in plain sight right behind TITANIA'S back. PUCK mimic her every move, unseen by the queen whose focus is elsewhere.)

TITANIA

The moon, me thinks, looks with a watery eye; and when she weeps, weeps every little flower, lamenting some enforced chastity.

(Titania exits. PUCK gives a thumbs up to the moon and then runs off after TITANIA.)

INTERMISSION

ACT II – PROLOGUE

(In front of the curtain, PHYL and PHILO sleep at their posts. DOGBERRY rides in alone, dismounts his stick horse and inspects the sleeping guards. DOGBERRY blows his whistle and the PHILOSTRATES snap awake and drawn their weapons.)

PHYL

Halt. No one shall pass.

PHILO

Halt in the name of the duke's newptials.

DOGBERRY

Nuptials.

PHYL

Nuptials.

DOGBERRY

Try it again.

PHILO

Halt in the name of the Nukes Dutials.

DOGBERRY

Perhaps if we did some roll playing it would help you understand how disappointed I am in your watch. Suppose it's late at night you two are standing guard alone.

PHYL
We're alone?

DOGBERRY
Yes.

PHILO
Where are you?

DOGBERRY
For the purposes of this exercise let's assume you're alone.

PHYL
All right. We're alone.

DOGBERRY
I'll pretend to be a rowdy drunk just come out of the tavern.

PHILO
So we're alone with a rowdy drunk?

DOGBERRY
Yes.

PHILO
Then we're not alone, are we?

DOGBERRY
Just do the role playing.

(DOGBERRY pretends to be drunk. The PHILOSTRATES just watch with interest.)

DOGBERRY *(as drunk)*
I'm drunk, so drunk. I'm throwing up on your shoe. I'm stealing your wallet....
(as DOGBERRY again)
It's your cue!

PHYL
Oh, Halt in the duke's name.

PHILO
No one shall pass!

PHYL
Newtuals.

DOGBERRY (*as drunk*)

I'm drunk. So make me.

PHYL

Oh, All right, then. Go your way.

DOGBERRY

What? No. What if I was a hardened criminal, come to Athens just to reek havoc during the celebration. What would you say?

PHYL

Oh....

PHILO

Well....

PHYL

Hummmm?

PHILO

I'd say, "Come back tomorrow when you're sober."

DOGBERRY

Excellent. Now, have you succeeded in acquiring entertainment for the Duke's wedding feast?

PHILO

Here is the scroll of all the plays that are fit for the Duke and his bride.

(He gives DOGBERRY a scroll. DOGBERRY looks at it upside down and scratches his head.)

PHILO

May I?

(PHILO turns the scroll right side up.)

DOGBERRY

Neighbours, make no boast of your writing and reading, for reading and writing come naturally as a gift from God. Let them skills appear when there is no need of such vanity. Vanity!

(MOE enters opposite with the MUSES hanging on his arm and every word. The three MUSES have come to try out for the Duke's wedding entertainment. DOGBERRY and his PHILOSTRATES watch MOE put on his moves from a distance. MOE does not see them.)

MOE

And then I said, "My other horse is a Ferrari."

(MOE and the MUSES laugh hysterically.)

Ah, good times. Good times.

LOVER MUSE

Do you think there'll ever be a part three?

MOE

Well, Lucy and Cameron are off hiding from the paparazzi, and Drew has joined the order of the nuns of the High Temple of Athena, but.... But... say, wait a minute. You girls are actresses, aren't you?

MADMAN MUSE

Yes. That's why we came to Athens.

POET MUSE

We're here to audition for the Duke's wedding play.

MOE

Well knock me over like the kouros of Kronos.

LOVER MUSE

No kidding. We heard the proclamation this morning. "Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth."

MADMAN MUSE

They say if our play is preferred we will be rich.

MOE

But ladies, it just so happens that I am one of those in charge of picking the entertainment.

POET MUSE

You don't suppose you could put in a good word for us?

MOE

I might be able to put in three good words.

MADMAN MUSE

In our play, we are muses sent here by the gods.

POET MUSE

I play the muse of poetry.

MADMAN MUSE

I'm the muse of madness.

LOVER MUSE

I play the muse of... love.

MOE

Very amusing. When can I preview your scene? Not here. Someplace private.

POET MUSE

You're not leading us on to get three poor, innocent girls alone.

MOE

Innocence has nothing to do with it.

(They all laugh. DOGBERRY blows his whistle and MOE jumps and rushes over to line up with the PHILOSTRATES.)

DOGBERRY

Lunch break over?

MOE

Yes.

LOVER MUSE

Does this mean you're not a famous producer?

POET MUSE

Do you even know Dionysus ?

MADMAN MUSE

Or any of the minor gods for that matter?

(MOE hems and stammers. The MUSES all start to weep.)

DOGBERRY

Very well, your play will be previewed. Go with these Philostrates.

(He blows his whistle and they fall over themselves to leave. MOE and DOGBERRY ride off the other way.)

ACT II - SCENE 1

(The curtain opens on the clearing. OBERON enters and finds TITANIA gone from her bower.)

OBERON

I wonder if Titania be awakened, then what it was that next came in her eye?

(PUCK enters at a sprint, throws on the roadrunner brakes, shifts into reverse and backs up to OBERON, all with appropriate sound effects.)

OBERON

How now, mad spirit?

PUCK

My mistress is in love with a monster. While she was in her dull sleep, a crew of patches, rude mechanicals were met together to rehearse a play, intended for great Theseus's wedding day. The shallowest thick-skin of that sort, I fixed a donkey head on his shoulders! So at his sight away his fellows flew. When in that moment, Titania waked, and straight away loved an ass.

OBERON

This falls out better than I could devise. But have you latched the Athenian's eyes with the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

PUCK

I took him sleeping and the Athenian woman at his side, that when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

HERMIA (*off stage*)

Son of Glouster, hang back!

OBERON

Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

PUCK

This is the woman, but not the man.

(PUCK and OBERON become trees. HERMIA enters in a rage, followed by DEMETRIUS.)

DEMETRIUS

Oh, why rebuke him that loves you so?

HERMIA

Now I but chide, but I should do thee worse, for thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse. If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep, kill me too. The sun was not so true unto the day as he was to me.

(She grabs him by the collar.)

Would he have stolen away from sleeping Hermia? It cannot be but thou hast murdered him!

DEMETRIUS

I am murdered! Pierced through the heart with your cruelty! Yet you, the murderer look as bright as clear--

HERMIA

What's this to my Lysander? Where is he? Thou wilt give him to me!

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my dogs!

(HERMIA gets violent with him as she talks, kneeling him to the ground.)

HERMIA

Out, dog! Out cur! Thou drivest me past the bounds of maiden's patience!

(She half picks him up drawing him in, nose to nose.)

Hast thou slain him! Tell true!

DEMETRIUS

I am not guilty!

HERMIA

Serpent!

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a misprised mood!

HERMIA

Worm. Adder! And from thy hated presence part I so!

(HERMIA throws him on the ground and storms off. Demetrius jumps up to follow but before he can take a two steps to follow, OBERON claps his hands twice, and DEMETRIUS freezes mid stride. OBERON pauses a moment before speaking.)

OBERON *(calmly)*

What.... what hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken, quite and laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight?

PUCK

Fate over-rules.

OBERON *(angry)*

About the wood go swifter than the wind and Helena of Athens look you find. All fancy-sick is she and pale of cheer with sighs of love. By some illusion, see you bring her here. I'll charm his eyes.

PUCK

I go. I go. Look how I go!

(PUCK goes extra slow to make OBERON pay for getting mad. She pantomimes blowing up a balloon and tying it off with a string. Then she slowly lets the invisible hot-air balloon lead her off stage. When alone, OBERON applies love juice in the still standing DEMETRIUS'S eyes.)

OBERON

Flower of this purple dye, hit with Cupid's archery. When his love he doth espy, let her shine as gloriously as Venus. When thou wakest, if she be by, beg of her for remedy.

(PUCK reenters, this time in a hurry. She carries two movie theater popcorns and gives one to OBERON.)

PUCK

Helena is here at hand, and the youth mistook by me, pleading for a lover's fee, Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON

Stand aside. Demetrius will wake.

PUCK

Then will two at once woo one!

(OBERON and PUCK retreat to the back to enjoy their popcorn while they watch. HELENA and LYSANDER enter. He is backing her up, so she doesn't see DEMETRIUS behind her.)

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn? Scorn and derision never come in tears
Look, when I vow, I weep!

HELENA

These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

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

(She turns to run away and bumps smack into DEMETRIUS. He wakes and falls immediately in goofy love.)

DEMETRIUS

O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine! To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
(Demetrius now backs HELENA up so that she becomes sandwiched between DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER.)

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! O,
let me kiss this princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

(He reaches to kiss her. HELENA ducks out of the way and DEMETRIUS hugs LYSANDE instead. They are about to blindly kiss when they realize the mistake and both yelp.)

HELENA

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

(The suitors run to each side of her, each take an arm and start kissing.)

HELENA

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? If you were men, you would not use a gentle lady so; to vow, and swear, and super-praise 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; none of noble sort would so offend a virgin!

(HELENA rips her arms free and storms away. LYSANDER prevents DEMETRIUS from following.)

LYSANDER

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;

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. My heart to Helen is return'd, there to remain.

(They grapple to prevent their rival from attending HELENA.)

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

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

(HERMIA enters. Seeing LYSANDER she runs and hugs him. He doesn't return the affection. DEMETRIUS takes the opportunity to break free and run to HELENA's side.)

HERMIA

Lysander, found; But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Fair Helena!

(He tries to break away but HERMIA will not let him out of her bear hug.)
She more engilds the night than all you fiery oes and eyes of light. Why seek'st thou me?
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

(He escapes to HELENA's side.)

HERMIA

You speak not as you think it cannot be.

HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy! Now I perceive you 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,--O, is it all forgot? All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence? It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly!

HERMIA

I am amazed at your passionate words. I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

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...

(She goes from pure anger to romantically accepting the praise.)

... goddess..., nymph..., divine and rare?

HERNIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA *(angry again)*

Ay, do, counterfeit sad looks, make mouths upon me when I turn my back; wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up!

(She breaks free.)

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

O excellent!

HERMIA

Sweet, do not scorn me so.

DEMETRIUS

(Putting up his dukes)

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat. Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.

(LYSANDER tries to get past HERMIA but she restrains him. He calls across to HELENA anyway.)

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.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come!

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

(HERMIA refuses to let LYSANDER go to fight. She ends up riding on his back.)

LYSANDER

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose, or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

(DEMETRIUS takes advantage of LYSANDER'S reduced mobility to step in a slap him several times, each time retreating a step out of LYSANDER'S reach.)

HERMIA

Why are you grown so rude? What change is this? Sweet love,--

LYSANDER

Out, tawny Tartar, out! Out, loathed medicine! Hated potion, hence!

(LYSANDER shakes HERMIA to the ground and goes after DEMETRIUS. They wrestle.)

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth; and so do you.

HERMIA

Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander? I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

LYSANDER

(speaking while having DEMETRIUS in a head lock.)

'Tis no jest that I do hate thee and love Helena.

(DEMETRIUS breaks free and LYSANDER follows him up stage to fight. HERMIA stops feeling sorry for herself and turns her attention to HELENA.)

HERMIA

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?

HELENA

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!

HERMIA

Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game. Tall personage!

(HERMIA begins taking out her earrings and preparing for a fight.)

And are you grown so high in his esteem; because I am 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.

(HERMIA attacks. HELENA runs around behind the men for protection.

HERMIA tries to vault through them to get to her. The men catch HERMIA midair, parallel to the ground.)

HELENA

Though you mock me, gentlemen, let her not hurt me. Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think, because she is something lower than myself, that I can match her.

HERMIA

Lower! hark, again.

HELENA

Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me. I never wrong'd you; Demetrius, 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:

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

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

HELENA

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.

HERMIA

'Little' again! Nothing but 'low' and 'littl'! Why will you suffer her to flout me thus? Let me come to her.

DEMETRIUS

Get you gone!

(They toss HERMIA backwards and go back to fighting each other.)

LYSANDER

Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right, of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS

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

(They wrestle. HERMIA picks herself up and stalks HELENA.)

HERMIA

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

HELENA

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

(HELENA bolts. HERMIA chases. OBERON claps his hands twice. All four lovers freeze, mid-fight. HERMIA and HELENA are tangled stage right. DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER are frozen stage left. PUCK jumps up to go play with the statues. As she talks with OBERON, she changes their arm positions into humorous poses. She straightens up DEMETRIUS and repositions his hand so that he has a finger up his nose. She moves to LYSANDER and puts one of his hands in the air and one in the crotch, like Michael Jackson, making the appropriate sound effect as she does. She skips across the stage and puts HELENA'S hand on her rump. From behind she grabs HERMIA's elbows and makes her do the "Macarena.")

OBERON

This... this is your negligence.

PUCK

Believe me, king of the shadows, I mistook. Did you not tell me I should know the man by the Athenian garments he had on? And so blameless proves my enterprise, and so I am glad I did it, as their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBERON

Crush this herb into Lysander's eye, its liquor has this virtuous property, to take all error from his sight. When they next awake, all this derision shall seem a dream and fruitless vision. And back to Athens shall the lovers go.

(He stops her from playing with the statues and gives her a bit of the purple flower.)

While I employ thee in this affair, I'll to my Queen and beg the Changeling Boy. And then I will release her charmed eye from the monster's view and all things shall be at peace.

PUCK

Your servant as always.

(OBERON exits.)

On the ground...

(PUCK stops as she realizes she has forgotten something. She goes to DEMETRIUS and picks him up and carries him on her shoulder across the stage to HELENA. PUCK repositions the statues so that they are in an embrace. She then picks up HERMIA and carries her back across to LYSANDER. PUCK sets her down and tilts head so that it is in LYSANDERS'S Michael Jackson arm pit.)

PUCK

On the ground, sleep sound.

(PUCK claps her hands and the lovers all fall to the ground. PUCK goes to LYSANDER and rubs some love juice onto his eye lids.)

PUCK

I'll apply to your eye, gentle lover, remedy. When thou wakest, thou takest true delight in the sight of thy former lady's eye. And the country proverb know, that every man should take his own, in your waking shall be shown. Jack shall have Jill; naught shall go ill; the man shall have his mare again and all shall be well.

(PUCK exits. In a moment, BOTTOM runs on stage, out of breath. He is bedecked in jewels and carries a small chest of jewels in his arms. The donkey is still on his head.)

BOTTOM

I'm rich!

(He hears the FOREST FAIRIES off stage and scurries to hide. The FAIRIES enter looking for him. They cross the stage in angry pursuit. When they are all gone, BOTTOM comes out of hiding. He does a little shimmy dance for joy, but fails to see TITANIA enter and come up behind him. When she speaks, he jumps.)

TITANIA

Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed while I stroke thy amiable cheeks and stick roses in thy sleek smooth head and kiss thy fair, large ears. Say what thou desirest.

BOTTOM

Truly? I have a great desire for hay. Good hay. Sweet hay.

TITANIA

Hay? I have a venturous fairy that shall seek the squirrel's horde and fetch thee new nuts.

BOTTOM

I pray you, let none of your people stir me. I have an exposition for sleep to come upon me!

TITANIA

Sleep, thou and I will wind thee in my arms. O, how I dote on thee.

(They sleep and snore. OBERON enters and watches the sleepers. PUCK enters, slams on the brakes and then goes up with OBERON to watch.)

OBERON

Do you see this sweet sight? Her dotage do I now begin to pity, for I met her in the woods, and when I had taunted her, I did ask her for the changeling child, which straight away she gave me. And now I have the boy, I will undo this hateful imperfection of her eyes. And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp from off the head of this Athenian. And think no more of this night's accidents but as the fierce vexation of a dream. But first I will release the Fairy Queen.

(OBERON applies the remedy to TITANIA'S eyelids while PUCK tugs on the donkey head.)

OBERON

Be as thou wast wont to be. See as thou wast wont to see. Now, My Titania, wake my sweet Queen.

(TITANIA slowly awakes.)

TITANIA

My Oberon, what visions have I seen. Me thought I was enamoured of an ass.

OBERON

Here lies your love.

TITANIA

(She suddenly becomes angrily suspicious)

How came these things to pass?

OBERON

Come, my queen. Take hands with me. Now thou and I are new in amity, and tomorrow midnight solemnly dance in Theseus's house, and bless it to all fair prosperity. There shall the pairs of Lovers be wedded.

PUCK

Fairy King! I hear the morning lark.

TITANIA *(still angry)*

Come, my Lord, and in our flight tell me how it came this night, that I sleeping here was found with this... mortal on the ground. What happened?

OBERON *(stammering)*

Well... it... I... Puck messed it up.

(They exit to beat the sunrise. In a moment, a sword flies onto the middle of the stage. XENAPOLYTA cartwheels onto the stage and picks up the sword. THESEUS leaps out, sword in hand. They battle. He disarms her and is

about to kiss her when DOGBERRY, MOE and the PHILOSTRATES come in puffing after a long climb.)

DOGBERRY

Secure the clearing, men.

THESEUS

Marry, sir, I pray you; for you see it is a busy time with me.

DOGBERRY

Marry, this it is, sir.

THESEUS

We wish less of your company.

DOGBERRY

It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers.

XENAPOLYTA

Go, and release the hounds.

THESEUS

Go, find out the forester; for now our observation is perform'd; and since we have the vaward of the day, my love shall hear the music of my hounds.

PHYL

What? Shall hear what?

THESEUS

My hounds. Go and release them.

PHILO

Hounds?

THESEUS

My hunting dogs. They are teathered back in the valley.

MOE

The valley? We just climbed all the way up here. I won't be climbing up and down.

THESEUS

Dispatch, I say. Find the hounds. Search in the western valley; let them go:

(DOGBERRY blows his whistle. They exit grumbling leaving the couple alone. XENAPOLYTA and THESEUS pick up their swords again to face off.)

THESEUS

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top, and mark the musical confusion of hounds and echo in conjunction.

XENAPOLYTA

I was with Hercules once, when in a wood of Crete his hounds bay'd the bear. His hounds were from Sparta.

THESEUS

My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind.

XENAPOLYTA

But the hounds of Hercules? Never did I hear such gallant sounds.

THESEUS

My hounds have heads that are hung with ears that sweep away the morning dew.

XENAPOLYTA

I never heard so musical a discord, such sweet thunder, as the hounds of Hercules.

THESEUS

(Getting jealous at so much talk of Hercules's hounds.)

My hounds are Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;

XENAPLOYTA

His hounds were slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells, each under each.

THESEUS

A cry more tuneable than mine was never holla'd to, in Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly: Judge when you hear.

(They sword fight, pause, drop their swords and run together. They are about to meet lips when EGEUS enters the clearing.)

EGEUS

Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke.

(EGEUS sees HERMIA on the ground.)

My Lord! This is my daughter. And this Lysander. This Demetrius and Helen. I wonder of there being here together.

T

HESEUS

No doubt you all rose up early to observe the rites of May. Pray you all, Stand up!

(He wakes up the four lovers. LYSANDER sees HERMIA and falls in love again. EGEUS rushes in to pry LYSANDER and HERMIA apart.)

EGEUS

My Lord, is this not the day that Hermia should give the answer of her choice?

THESEUS

It is.

(to the lovers)

I know you are rival enemies, how came you all to sleep here?

LYSANDER

My lord, I shall reply. For truly I would speak. I came with Hermia. Our intent was to be gone from Athens where we might...

EGEUS

Enough! Enough! I beg the law, the law upon his head. They would have stolen away, they would have defeated you of your wife and me of my consent. Demetrius, she should be your wife!

DEMETRIUS

I know not by what power but, my love for Hermia.... it melted.... like the snow. And all the faith, the virtue of my heart, the object and pleasure of my eye, is only Helena....

EGEUS

No!

(EGEUS falls to the ground, devastated.)

The law, my Lord!

THESEUS

Egeus, I will overbear your will, for in the temple, by-and-by, with us, these couples shall be wed. Three and three. Come, Xenapolyta I will... confer with you.

(THESEUS and XENAPOLYTA rush off. EGEUS jumps up and follows. DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER turn to their loves. HELENA and HERMIA still seem mad.)

DEMETRIUS

Helena!

LYSANDER

Hermia!

(HERMIA and HELENA simultaneously slap their men and then stomp off together like girlfriends wronged. The men rise slowly and then stumble after them. BOTTOM wakes.)

BOTTOM

When my cue comes call me and I will answer.

(He pops up, suddenly wide awake and looks for his troop.)

Quince! Flute! Left me asleep...? I had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man. Methought I was.... Methought I had.... The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, nor his heart to conceive what my dream was. Man is but an ass if he says what I thought I dreamt.

(He studies his reflection in the pool of the waterfall and is relieved.)

I shall get Quince to write a ballet of this dream. It shall be called "Bottom's Dream". I will sing it before the duke.

(He exits as the curtain closes.)

ACT 2, SCENE 2

(The lights come up on QUINCE, QUICKLY, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING sitting on the apron.)

QUINCE

Have you sent to Bottom's house? Is he come home yet?

STARVELING

He cannot be heard of.

SNOUT

Oh, Lord!

STARVELING

Out of doubt he is transported.

FLUTE

If he come not, then the play is marred.

SNOUT

It goes not forward, does it?

QUINCE

It is not possible. You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

FLUTE

No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

QUINCE

Yea and the best person too;

SNOUT

And he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

QUINCE

You must say 'paragon:' a paramour is, God bless us, another thing.

QUICKLY

I can play the part. I know the lines and blocking.

(She acts the death scene from Romeo & Juliet as a great actor would.)

O my love! O, here will I set up my everlasting rest, and shake the yoke of inauspicious stars from this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last! Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you the doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss a dateless bargain to engrossing death!

(She stabs herself and falls dead, a masterpiece of acting. The RUDE MECHANICALS look at her dumbfounded.)

We are doomed!

QUINCE

Oh, Lord, Lord, Lord!

SNOUT

We are undone!

STARVLING

(Enter SNUG)

SNUG
Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our play had gone forward, we would have all been made rich men.

O sweet bully Bottom!

STARVLING

FLUTE
Thus hath Bottom lost sixpence a day for the rest of his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day.

STARVLING
If the duke had not given him sixpence a day for the rest of his life for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged.

SNUG
He would have deserved it

FLUTE
Sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

(They all cry. Enter BOTTOM. He watches them cry for a bit, confused. They don't notice him, and even when he talks to them they don't realize he is there.)

BOTTOM
Where are these lads?

STARVLING
Leave us alone!

BOTTOM
Where are these hearts?

SNOUT
Oh, Lord, lord, lord.

SNUG

We have lost a fortune!

QUICKLY

Sixpence a day.

FLUTE

Our Bottom is gone.

(They suddenly realize it is BOTTOM and jump up to mob him.)

QUINCE

Bottom!

SNOUT

O most courageous day!

STARVLING:

O most happy hour!

BOTTOM

Masters, I am to discourse wonders, but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

QUINCE

Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

BOTTOM

Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred!

ALL

Preferred!

BOTTOM

Let Thisbe have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pair his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words! Away! Away!

(They exit.)

ACT II - SCENE 3

(The curtain opens on the façade of the Greek palace. DOGBERRY, MOE, PHYLO and PHILO watch auditions. A COMEDIAN stands center telling jokes as the PHILOSTRATES take notes.)

COMEDIAN

Take my captured Spartan female concubine... please.

(MOE laughs.)

COMEDIAN

Where does a Thessalian bull sleep at night...? Anywhere he wants.

(MOE laughs.)

DOGBERRY

Next!

COMEDIAN

I haven't finished.

DOGBERRY

Next audition!

(PHYL and PHILO lift and carry the COMEDIAN off stage. He continues to spout jokes as he goes.)

COMEDIAN

Why did the Mycenaean sage poultry cross the dirt cart path? Hey, this is good stuff! Thank you. Thank you. I'm here all week. Don't forget to tip your palace house slaves.

DOGBERRY

This is the best you could come up with?

MOE

I liked him.

DOGBERRY

The Duke said "entertainment."

MOE

There's still one more audition.

(PHILO and PHYL return escorting the three MUSES and then retake their places as judges. The MUSES pass out headshots to the panel.)

PHILO

The name of your piece?

LOVER MUSE

"The thrice three muses.

MADMAN MUSE

Mourning for the death of learning,

POET MUSE

Late deceased in beggary."

PHYL

Begin when ready.

(Pastoral music begins. The MUSES do choreographed movements as they recite their poem.)

ALL THREE

Lovers and Madmen have such seething brains, such shaping fantasies that apprehend more than cool reason ever comprehends.

MADMAN MUSE

The Lunatic.

LOVER MUSE

The lover.

POET MUSE

And the poet.

ALL THREE

Are of imagination all compact.

MADMAN MUSE

One sees more devils than vast hell can hold, that's the madman.

LOVER MUSE

The lover, all as frantic, sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.

POET MUSE

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling doth glance from heaven to earth.

LOVER MUSE & MADMAN MUSE

From earth to heaven.

POET MUSE

And as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown,

MADMAN MUSE

The poet's pen turns them to shapes.

LOVER MUSE

And gives to airy.

ALL THREE

Nothing,
(fading echoes)
 Nothing, nothing, nothing.

POET MUSE

A local habitation and a name.

MADMAN MUSE

Such tricks hath strong imagination,

LOVER MUSE

That if it would but apprehend some joy,

POET MUSE

It comprehends some bringer of that joy;

MADMAN MUSE

Or in the night,

LOVER MUSE

Imagining some fear,

POET MUSE

How easy is a bush supposed

ALL THREE

a bear!

(The PHILOSTRATES applaud wildly and mob the MUSES with congratulations. The Wedding parties interrupt their fawning with a grand entrance. XENAPOLYTA is now a queen and THESEUS is completely subservient to her wishes. EGEUS is drunk and carries a bottle with her. The MUSES are in awe of the celebrities. The royal couples wave to the MUSES and start to leave.)

DOGBERRY

One word, sir. Our watch, sir, have indeed, stirred up the Athenian youth to merriment?

MOE

Here is the list.

THESEUS

I spoke in metaphor. We are.... In a hurry.

XENAPOLTYTA

(exercising her power)

What masques and dances shall we have?

THESEUS

My love?

XENAPOLYTA

What revels are at hand to wear away this long age of three hours between our after-supper and bedtime?

THESEUS

Gentle sweet...joy and fresh days of love accompany our hearts!

LYSANDER

And beds!

XENAPOLYTA

I say we will have a play to ease the anguish of a torturing hour?

THESEUS

Torturing hour?

XENAPOLYTA (to DOGBERRY)

Say, what abridgement have you for this evening? What masque? What music? How shall we beguile the lazy time?

THESEUS (*very annoyed*)

What have you?

PHYL (*to MUSES*)

Stand close by.

PHILO (*to MUSES*)

We may tell you, your play goes forward.

DOGBERRY

These, sir, are the masters of your revels.

PHYL

Here Majesty. We have previewed all the entertainment.

PHILO

This is a brief. How many dances, plays.

PHYL

Your Majesty may make the choice of which to see.

PHILO

May we suggest, "The Thrice Three Muses Mourning for the Death of Learning, Late Deceased in Beggary."

(The MUSES wave and wink at THESEUS.)

XENAPOLYTA

We'll none of that.

PHYL

But....

XENAPOLYTA

This is some satire not keeping with a wedding ceremony.

THESEUS

As your Majesty wishes.

(The MUSES are crushed. The PHILOSTRATES hurry them off stage. The MADMAN MUSE breaks free and charges back after THESEUS. The other MUSES restrain her and drag her off stage.)

PHYL

There are other choices.

PHILO

Other entertainments.

PHYL

Perhaps, "The Battle with the Centaurs and Mighty Hercules."

XENAPOLYTA

(remembering her love for Hercules)

Hercules.

THESEUS

(annoyed with XENAPOLYTA)

That is an old device. It was played when we first came back a conqueror.

PHILO

Here, my Lord. "The Riot of the Topsy Bacchanals, Tearing the Tracian Singer in Their Rage, to Be Sung to the Harp by an Athenian Eunuch."

(The men cross their legs at the mention of the eunuch. THESEUS shakes his head.)

THESEUS

No talk of Eunuchs tonight.

(The PHILOSTRATES check the scroll and argue among themselves. DOGBERRY and MOE come over and join in.)

THESEUS

What is it?

DOGBERRY

There is one more...

PHYL(*reading*)

"A Tedious Brief Scene of Young Pyramus and His Love Thisbe; Very Tragical Mirth."

THESEUS

Merry and tragical? Tedious and brief? How shall we find this?

PHYL

A play there is, my lord, some ten words long.

PHILO

Which is as brief as I have ever known a play, but by ten words, my lord, it is too long, which makes it tedious.

MOE

In all the play there is not one word apt. Not one player fitted.

DOGBERRY

Tragical, my lord, it is; for Pyramus therein doth kill himself. Which when I saw it rehearsed, I must confess, made me laugh out loud.

THESEUS

Who acts this play?

PHYL

Common men who labor in Athens here.

PHILO

Men who never labored in their minds until now.

(The PHILOSTRATES laugh. THESEUS looks over at XENAPOLYTA. She shakes her head.)

THESEUS

We will hear it.

PHYL

No!

MOE

It is not for you!

PHYL

I have heard it over, and it is nothing.

PHILO

Nothing in the world.

DOGBERRY

Unless you can find some sport in their intents.

THESEUS

I will hear that play; for never anything can be amiss when simpleness and duty tender it.
Go bring them in and set our places.

(Exit PHILOSTRATES, reluctantly.)

XENAPOLYTA

I love not to see wretchedness overcharged and duty perishing.

THESEUS

You shall see no such thing.

XENAPOLYTA

They say these actors can do nothing in this kind.

THESEUS

The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing. It was you who wished to see a play.

XENAPOLYTA

I see.

EGEUS

We could have had Hercules.

THESEUS

Shall we skip it then?

(Everyone except XENAPOLYTA thinks that's a great idea. The PHILOSTRATES re-enter with QUINCE.)

DOGBERRY

So please your graces, the prologue is addressed.

XENAPOLYTA

Let them approach.

(The rest of the wedding party groans and sits to watch. XENAPOLYTA smiles at THESEUS. The PHILOSTRATES stand behind the royal box.)

QUINCE

If we offend, it is with our good will. That you should think we come not to offend, but with good will. To show our simple skill. That is the true beginning of our end. Consider then we come not in despite. Our true intent is for your delight. The Actors are at hand!

(The actors don't enter)

The Actors are at hand.... The Actors are at hand.

(QUINCE goes to get them.)

LYSANDER

He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop.

EGEUS

Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in tune.
Who is next?

(QUINCE returns with the actors. BOTTOM is dressed like a knight. FLUTE has a wig, a dress and a huge, stuffed bosom. SNOUT wears a poncho of canvas painted like stone bricks. SNUG wears a lion costume. STARVELING carries the lantern and bush and a leash with a stuffed animal dog on it. QUICKLY hands people their props from the prop trunk. She arranges the actors across the stage, backs to the audience. BOTTOM is stage right. FLUTE is stage left. For the next section, it should seem that QUINCE is saying a continuous line and the players are just tossing in their signature sound.)

QUINCE

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show, but wonder on 'til truth makes all things plain.
This man is Pyramus....,

(BOTTOM turns around and strikes a manly pose with his signature sound effect.)

BOTTOM

Wauf!

QUINCE

...if you would know. This beautiful lady Thisbe....,

(FLUTE turns around and strikes a ballet pose. Everywhere FLUTE moves, it should be noted, she seems to float like a ballet dance and always ends up in one of the official ballet positions.)

FLUTE

Tee-hee.

QUINCE

...is certain. This player with lime and rough cast doth present... Wall...

(SNOUT turns around and holds up the chink in his fingers.)

SNOUT

Chink.

QUINCE

That vile wall....,

Chink. SNOUT (*re-posing*)

... which did these lovers... QUINCE

Wauf! BOTTOM (*re-posing*)

Tee-hee. FLUTE (*re-positioning*)

...sunder, and through Wall's chink... QUINCE

Chink. SNOUT

QUINCE
... poor souls, they are content to whisper, at the which let no man wonder. This player,
with lantern, dog and bush of thorn, presenteth Moonshine...

(STARVELING turns and holds the lantern aloft.)

Here, Peter Quince. STARVELING

... for if you will know, by Moonshine ... QUINCE

Here, Peter Quince. STARVELING

... did these Lovers... QUINCE

Wauf! BOTTOM

Tee-hee. FLUTE

... think no scorn to meet at Ninus tomb, there, there to woo. This grisly Beast... QUINCE

(SNUG jumps and turns to the audience, claws out.)

NUG

Roar!

QUINCE

... which by name lion hight, the trusty Thisbe

FLUTE

Tee-hee.

(FLUTE skips up next to the Lion.)

QUINCE

.... coming first by night, did scare away, or rather did afright.

(The Lion scares Thisbe.)

SNUG

Roar!

FLUTE

Eek!

(FLUTE turns and both Thisbe and the Lion run in place as if he lion is chasing her.)

QUINCE

And as she fled, her mantle she did fall...

(Thisbe and Lion stop. Thisbe pulls out a handkerchief and lets it fall. They follow it with their eyes all the way to the ground. They look up, face to face.)

FLUTE

Eek!

(Thisbe leaps away.)

QUINCE

...which Lion...

SNUG

Roar!

QUINCE

... vile with bloody mouth, did stain.

(The Lion puts the handkerchief in its mouth and then spits it out and trots off.)

QUINCE

Anon comes Pyramus...

BOTTOM

Wauf!

QUINCE

... sweet youth and tall, and finds his trusty Thisbe's...

FLUTE

Tee-hee.

QUINCE

... mantle slain.

(Pyramus falls to the floor and dramatically raises the handkerchief.)

QUINCE

Wherein with blade, with bloody blainful blade, he bravely broached his boiling bloody breast...

(Pyramus draws his sword and stabs himself and dies.)

BOTTOM

Wauf!

QUINCE

and Thisbe...

FLUTE

Tee-hee. ,

QUINCE

...tarrying in mulberry shade, her dagger drew, and died.

(Thisbe dances in, pulls the sword out of Pyramus and stabs herself.)

FLUTE

Tee-hee.

QUINCE

For all the rest, let Lion...,

SNUG

Roar!

QUINCE

... Moonshine...,

STARVELING
Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE
... Wall...,

SNOUT
Chink.

QUINCE
... and Lovers...,

(half-rising from their death beds.)

BOTTOM
Wauf!

FLUTE
Tee-hee.

QUINCE
... twain, at large discourse while here they do remain.

(QUINCE hurries everyone off stage to their places. They line up with their backs to the audience. When they enter, they turn to face the audience. When they exit, the actors go up stage and turn their backs to the audience. QUICKLY positions the wall center stage. The royalty talk amongst themselves as this happens.)

XENAPOLYTA
I wonder if the lion is to speak.

EGEUS
One lion may, when many asses do.

SNOUT
In this same interlude it doth befall that I, one Snout by name, present a wall. And such a wall as I would have you think, that had in it a cranny, hole or chink. Chink. Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe, did whisper often very secretly. This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show that I am that same wall, the truth is so. And this the cranny is, right and sinister, through which the fearful lovers are to whisper. Chink.

HELENA
Would you desire a wall to speak better?

EGEUS
It is the wittiest partition that I ever heard discourse.

XENAPOLYTA

Pyramus draws near the wall.

THESEUS

Silence.

(Pyramus pantomimes riding up on a horse. MISTRESS QUICKLY makes the sound effects. Pyramus pulls on the reigns.)

QUICKLY

Neigh.

(Pyramus dismounts and slaps the imaginary horse on the rump. It whinnies and runs away. Pyramus motions to the sky.)

BOTTOM

O grim-looking night. Oh night with hue so black. Oh night which ever art when day is not. O night. O night! Alack, alack, alack. I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot!

(turning to the Wall.)

And thou, O wall, thou sweet and lovely wall that stands between her father's ground and mine, Thou wall, OOOOO Wall!

(Pyramus slinks up to the Wall. Wall becomes very uncomfortable at the intimate approach.)

O sweet o lovely wall, show me thy chink with which to blink through with my eye.

(Wall shies away and is so concerned about Pyramus's closeness that he forgets to put up the chink. Pyramus answers sarcastically.)

Thanks courteous wall.

(Pyramus looks through the nearest hole he can find for the chink which happens to be Wall's ear. Pyramus twists Wall's head around like a periscope.)

But what see I? No Thisbe do I see.

(Pyramus jumps back from the Wall.)

O wicked wall through whom I see no bliss; curst be thy stones for thus deceiving me!!!!

EGEUS

The wall, being sensible, should curse back.

BOTTOM

No, in truth. Deceiving me is Thisbe's cue! She is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the hole in the wall. You shall see.... Curst be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

(Thisbe enters quickly and poses down left.)

FLUTE

O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans for parting my fair Pyramus and me. Oooohh.

BOTTOM

I see a voice. Now will I to the chink so I can hear my Thisbe's face!

(Pyramus bounds to the Wall as Thisbe dances to it. BOTTOM motions to FLUTE that they're using the ears instead of the planned chink. They look through either side of SNOOT'S ears.)

FLUTE

My Love? Thou art my love I think!

BOTTOM

O kiss me through the hole in this vile wall.

(They passionately kiss through SNOOT'S ears. FLUTE pulls back at the taste of ear wax. BOTTOM continues to go for it. We can tell by the look on SNOOT'S face, at first he is shocked by the kiss, but grows to like it as BOTTOM continues.)

FLUTE

I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

(BOTTOM realizes he is the only one left kissing and sheepishly withdraws.)

BOTTOM

Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb...

QUINCE

Ninus tomb!

BOTTOM

Ninus tomb meet me straight away?

FLUTE

Tide life, tide death, I come without delay.

(They exit with style.)

SNOOT

Thus have I.... wall,... my part discharged so, and being done, this wall away doth go.

(Wall exits.)

EGEUS

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

XENAPOLYTA

The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

THESEUS

It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

XENAPOLYTA

If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men.

THESEUS

Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

(Enter SNUG and STARVELING.)

SNUG

You ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear the smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor, may now, perchance, both quake and tremble here when lion, rough in wildest rage, doth roar. Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am no lion, for if I should as lion come into this place, it were the pity of my life. Roar.

(The Lion hides. STARVELING moves forward.)

STARVELING

This lantern doth the horned moon present.

DEMETRIUS

He should have worn his horns on his head.

STARVELING

This lantern doth the horned moon present.

LYSANDER

His horns are invisible.

STARVELING

This lantern doth the horned moon present. Myself, the man in the moon do seem to be.

HELENA

The man should be put in the lantern, how else is he the man in the moon.

(STARVLING pouts.)

XENAPOLYTA

Proceed, moon.

STARVELING

All I have to say is to tell you that the lantern is the moon. I, the man in the moon, this thorn bush, is my thorn bush and this dog..... this dog..... This dog...?

(STARVELING looks around for his dog. The end of his leash is now empty.

He begins to panic. QUICKLY runs and gets down on all fours and plays the dog. STARVELING returns to happiness.)

... is my dog!

QUICKLY

Woof.

EGEUS

All these should be in the lantern.

THESEUS

Silence. Here comes Thisbe.

(The Lion hides behind STAVELING and Thisbe dances in.)

FLUTE

This is old Ninny's tomb.

QUINCE

Ninus tomb.

FLUTE

Ninus tomb. Where is my love?

(Lion jumps out to scare her.)

SNUG

Roar!

FLUTE

Eek!

SNUG

Roar!

FLUTE

Eek!

(Lion chases her. They skip around STARVELING. When they get back around to the front, they stop, and Thisbe ceremoniously drops her handkerchief. They watch it flutter to the ground before the action resumes.)

SNUG

Roar!

FLUTE

Eek!

(Thisbe leaps out. Lion picks up the handkerchief in its mouth and whips it from side to side. Lion spits out the cloth and exits.)

DEMETRIUS

Well roared, Lion!

HERMIA

Well run Thisbe!

XENAPOLYTA

Well shone, moon.

HELENA

Well moused, Lion.

EGEUS

And then came Pyramus.

(Pyramus turns and enters.)

BOTTOM

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams for by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams, I trust to taste of truest Thisbe's sight....

(He sees the handkerchief.)

But stay, O spite! What dreadful dole is here? Eyes do you see? How can it be? O dainty duck, o dear.

(He picks up the handkerchief.)

Thy mantle, good, what, stained with blood? Approach ye furies fell. O fates, come! Come, cut thread and thrum. Quail crush conclude and quell! Lion, vile, hath here deflowered my dear. Which is - no, no - which was the fairest dame that lived, that loved, that liked that looked with cheer.

(He summons up the courage to kill himself and draws his sword.)

Come tears, confound. Out sword and wound the pap of Pyramus. Aye, that left pap where heart doth hop. Thus die I!

(He stabs himself, staggers and falls to the ground. The Royal couples applaud. Thisbe starts to enter. Pyramus interrupts them by jumping back up to die again. Thisbe exits. He stabs himself three more times quickly.)

Thus, thus, thus! Now... I am dead.

(He drops instantly. The couples start to applaud. Thisbe starts to enter. Pyramus pops back up. Thisbe retreats. He staggers about the stage, stagger up to the royal couples and pretending to throw up on them as he speaks.)

Now I am fled. My soul is in the sky. Tongue, lose thy light!

(He throws up on STARVELING who runs away.)

Moon, take thy flight! Now die!

(He falls. The royals reluctantly start to clap. Thisbe turns to enter. BOTTOM pops up to his knees. Thisbe turns away. Greek soldier style, he impales himself on his sword and then rolls to the edge of the apron.)

Die!

(He rolls off the stage and onto the auditorium floor. Thisbe enters. With the royal couples, they come and peer over the edge of the stage. BOTTOM pops up. The royals and Thisbe scramble back to their places.)

Die!

(BOTTOM hands his sword to an audience member in the front row, gets them to stand, and then runs onto his own sword. He staggers to the stage edge, turns back to thank the audience member with a nod, then climbs back up on stage, acting like it is the most difficult thing ever and grunting in

pain. After several attempts he is able to ascend the stage and rolls back to his place.)

Die!

(This time the royals don't applaud, they just wait. BOTTOM pops up again. The royals throw up their hands. BOTTOM stabs himself, with much resistance and grunting, through one ear and out the other. He saws it back and forth and then pulls away the sword. With his fingertips and sound effects, he acts out blood spurting out of each ear. He suddenly stands up straight and acts like his body is a ratcheting lawn sprinkler, spewing blood across a lawn. He starts stage right and "chu ,chu, chu, chu, chu's" across the panorama of the stage, then snaps back to his original position to repeat the sprinkler pattern. QUINCE rushes into the acting space and stands next to BOTTOM. As BOTTOM ratchets around he comes face to face with QUINCE, jumps, and instantly falls dead.)

Die.

(The royals applaud wildly. QUINCE goes back and argues with FLUTE. FLUTE doesn't want to go on and is angry.)

EGEUS

With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

THESEUS

How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

XENAPOLYTA

She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.

(QUINCE throws FLUTE onto the stage. Once on FLUTE smiles and becomes his sweet character. Thisbe dances in. She stops short when she sees Pyramus on the ground.)

FLUTE

Asleep my love?

(She ballet kicks him, but he doesn't move.)

Whaaaaat, dead my dove?

(Thisbe falls next to Pyramus.)

O Pyramus arise!

(He starts to arise and she pushes him forcefully back down.)

Speak! Speak! Quite dumb. Dead! Dead! These lily lips this cherry nose, these yellow cowslip cheeks, are gone! Are gone! Lovers make moan.

(FLUTE pulls BOTTOM up and smothers him in Thisbe's enormous, stuffed bosom.)

His eyes were green as leeks!

(Thisbe suddenly gets the idea to kill herself. She drops BOTTOM plop on his head.)

Tongue, not a word, out trusty sword!

(Thisbe picks up the sword.)

Come, blade, my breast imbrue! And farewell friends, thus Thisbe ends. Adieu.

(She stabs herself. She does the “dying swan” fluttering slowly to the ground. She flutters up to speak again.)

Adieu.

(She flutters up and then slowly sinks all the way to the floor.)

Adieu.

(She dies. BOTTOM, cannot stand not having the last death. He jumps up and takes the sword away from FLUTE. He pantomimes cutting out his heart, holds up his still beating heart, and then plays Hackisack with it.)

BOTTOM

Die.

(FLUTE jumps up, just as competitive, takes the sword and hollers in pain as he pantomimes cutting out his eyeball. He drops the eye on the floor and hits it like a golf ball into the audience.)

FLUTE

Adieu!

(BOTTOM takes the sword back and pantomimes cutting open his stomach. Hand over hand he pulls out his intestines. He blows up the intestines like a long, skinny balloon and pantomimes tying it up into the shape of a poodle. He pops the balloon with the sword and pretends to watch it fly around the stage. FLUTE grabs at the sword. BOTTOM won't let it go. They tug-of-war with the sword. QUINCE comes forward, takes the sword from them, stabs BOTTOM and then stabs FLUTE. They fall dead. QUINCE slits his own throat and falls with them. The royals stand and applaud.)

HELENA

Moonshine and lion are left to bury the dead.

EGEUS

Aye, and wall too.

BOTTOM *(popping up)*

No, the wall is down. Will it please you to see the epilogue?

ALL

NO!

DEMETRIUS

No epilogue, I pray you, for your play needs no excuse.

HELENA

Never excuse. For when the players are all dead, there is no one to blame.

XENAPOLYTA

It is a fine tragedy and so it is truly.

(The RUDE MECHANICALS comes forward and take extended bows. PHILO and PHYL drag them off.)

THESEUS

Wow.

(He winds his watch forward)

Midnight.

XENAPOLYTA

Lovers to bed, it is almost fairies time.

THESEUS

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn.

XENAPOLYTA

As much as this night we have over-watched. Lovers, to bed.

(The lovers run off leaving EGEUS alone with DOGBERRY and MOE. She passes out. MOE and DOGBERRY carry her off. The FAIRIES and GUMPS sneak out of hiding.)

PEASEBLOSSOM

Now the hungry lion roars.

COBWEB

And the wolf behowls the moon.

PEASEBLOSSOM

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores.

AFFLECK

All with weary task foredone.

MOTH

Now the wasted brands do glow.

ROSEBUD

While the screech owl, screeching loud.

SNAPDRAGON

Puts the wretch, that lies in woe, in remembrance of a shroud.

MUSTARDSEED

Now it is the time of night that the graves, all gaping wide, every one lets forth his sprite in the church-way paths to glide.

COBWEB

And we fairies, that do come by the triple Hectates run.

MOTH

From the presence of the sun.

MUSTARDSEED

Following darkness like a dream.

AFFLECK

Now frolic!

(The FAIRIES and GUMPS run wild. OBERON and TITANIA enter, hand in hand. The FAIRIES and GUMPS freeze, fearful of being in trouble for their frolic.)

OBERON

Now until the break of day, through the house each fairy stray, to the best bride bed will we, which by us shall blessed be.

TITANIA

And the issue they create, ever shall be fortunate. So shall all the couples three, ever true in loving be.

OBERON

And the blots of Nature's hand, shall not in their issue stand.

TITANIA

With this field-dew consecrate, every fairy take his gait, and each, several chambers bless. Through this palace, with sweet peace; and the owner of it blest, ever shall in safety rest.

OBERON

Trip away. Make no stay. Meet me all by break of day.

(The FAIRIES and GUMPS don't move.)

Now frolic.

(FAIRIES and GUMPS run wild through the audience and out the back. Left alone on stage is PUCK.)

PUCK

If we shadows have offended, think but this and all is mended; that you have but slumbered here, while these visions did appear, and this weak and idle theme, no more yielding but a dream. Give me your hands if we be friends, and Robin shall restore amends.

(Exit)