

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 3, Scene 2

*Enter **OBERON**, King of Fairies, solus*

OBERON

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

*Enter **ROBIN***

Here comes my messenger.—How now, mad spirit?
5 What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

ROBIN

My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals
10 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,

***OBERON**, the Fairy King, enters.*

OBERON

I wonder if Titania is awake yet, and if she is, I
wonder what the first thing she saw was.
Whatever it is, she must be completely in love
with it now.

***ROBIN** enters.*

Ah, here comes my messenger.—What’s going
on, you crazy spirit? What havoc have you
wreaked in this part of the forest?

ROBIN

My mistress Titania is in love with a monster.
While she was sleeping in her bed of flowers, a
group of bumbling idiots, rough workmen from
Athens, got together nearby to rehearse some
play they plan to perform on Theseus’s wedding

Original Text

Were met together to rehearse a play
 Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
 The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
 Who Pyramus presented in their sport,
 15 Forsook his scene and entered in a brake,
 When I did him at this advantage take,
 An ass's noll I fixèd on his head.
 Anon his Thisbe must be answerèd,
 And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
 20 As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
 Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
 Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
 Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky—
 So at his sight away his fellows fly;
 25 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls.

Modern Text

day. The stupidest one, who played Pyramus in their play, finished his scene and went to sit in the bushes to wait for his next cue. I took that opportunity to stick a donkey's head on him. When it was time for him to go back onstage and talk to his Thisbe, he came out of the bushes and everyone saw him. His friends ran away as fast as ducks scatter when they hear a hunter's gunshot. One of them was so frightened when he heard my footsteps that he yelled, "Murder!" and called for help from Athens. They were all so afraid that they completely lost their common sense. They started to become scared of inanimate objects, terrified by the thorns and briars that catch at their clothing and pull off their sleeves and hats. I led them on in this frightened, distracted state, and left sweet

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 2

He "Murder!" cries and help from Athens calls.
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
 30 For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch,
 Some sleeves, some hats—from yielders all things catch.
 I led them on in this distracted fear
 And left sweet Pyramus translated there.
 When in that moment so it came to pass,
 Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON

35 This falls out better than I could devise.
 But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes
 With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

ROBIN

I took him sleeping—that is finished too—
 And the Athenian woman by his side,
 40 That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA

OBERON

(aside to ROBIN) Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

ROBIN

(aside to OBERON) This is the woman, but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

45 Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse.

Pyramus there, transformed into someone with a donkey's head. At that exact moment, Titania woke up and immediately fell in love with him, an ass.

OBERON

This is going even better than I planned. But have you put the love juice from the flower on the eyes of that Athenian, as I asked you to do?

ROBIN

Yes, I found him when he was asleep—so that's taken care of too—and the Athenian woman was sleeping near him. When he woke up, he must have seen her.

DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.

OBERON

(speaking so that only ROBIN can hear) Step aside. Here's the Athenian coming now.

ROBIN

(speaking so that only OBERON can hear) That's definitely the woman I saw, but it's not the same man.

DEMETRIUS

Why are you so rude to someone who loves you so much? Save that kind of harsh language for your worst enemy.

HERMIA

I'm only scolding you now, but I should treat you

Original Text

For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
 If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
 Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
 And kill me too.

Modern Text

much worse, because I'm afraid you've given me
 good reason to curse you. If you killed Lysander
 while he was sleeping, then you're already up to
 your ankles in blood. You might as well jump right
 into a bloodbath and kill me, too.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 3

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

DEMETRIUS

So should the murdered look, and so should I,
 Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty.

- 60 Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
 As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a misprised mood.

- 75 I am not guilty of Lysander's blood.
 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

HERMIA

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

DEMETRIUS

An if I could, what should I get therefore?

He was more faithful to me than the sun is to the
 daytime. Would he have snuck away from me
 while I was asleep? I'll believe that when I believe
 that there's a hole through the center of the earth,
 and the moon has passed all the way through to
 the other side. The only possibility is that you've
 murdered him. A murderer should look like you
 do, so pale and grim.

DEMETRIUS

That's how someone who's been murdered
 should look, and that's how I look. You've pierced
 me through the heart with your cruelty, and yet
 you, the murderer, look as bright and clear as a
 star in the sky.

HERMIA

What does that have to do with my Lysander?
 Where is he? Oh, good Demetrius, will you find
 him for me?

DEMETRIUS

I would rather feed his corpse to my dogs.

HERMIA

Get out, dog! You've driven me to my wit's end.
 Did you kill him, then? From now on I won't even
 consider you a human being. Oh, just tell the truth
 for once. tell the truth, if only for my sake.—
 Would you have even dared to look at him when
 he was awake? And did you kill him while he was
 sleeping? Oh, how brave of you! A snake could
 do that as easily as you could. A snake did do it,
 because no snake ever had a more forked, lying
 tongue than you have.

DEMETRIUS

You're getting all worked up over a
 misunderstanding. I didn't kill Lysander. ?As far
 as I know, he's not even dead.

HERMIA

Then please tell me he's all right.

DEMETRIUS

If I told you that, what would I get out of it?

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 4**HERMIA**

A privilege never to see me more.

- 80 And from thy hated presence part I so.

HERMIA

The privilege of never seeing me again. And now
 I'm going to leave your despised company. You'll

Original Text

See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

Exit HERMIA

DEMETRIUS

There is no following her in this fierce vein.

Here therefore for a while I will remain.

So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

- 85 For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe,
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his tender here I make some stay.

(lies down and sleeps)

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What hast thou done? Thou hast

- 90 mistaken quite,
And laid the love juice on some true love's sight.
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

Then fate o'errules that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

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

ROBIN

I go, I go. Look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

Exit ROBIN

Modern Text

never see me again, whether or not he's dead.

HERMIA exits.

DEMETRIUS

I can't go after her when she's in a rage like this.

So I'll stay here for a while. Sadness gets worse when you haven't had enough sleep. I'll try to sleep a little here. (DEMETRIUS *lies down and falls asleep*)

OBERON

(to ROBIN) What have you done? You've made a mistake and put the love-juice on someone else, someone who was truly in love. Because of your mistake someone's true love must have turned bad, instead of this man's false love being turned into a true love.

ROBIN

In that case, it must be fate. That's the way of the world. For every man who's faithful to his true love, a million end up running after a different lover.

OBERON

Go around the forest, moving faster than the wind, and make sure you find Helena of Athens.—She's lovesick, and her face is pale from all the sighing she's been doing, because sighing is bad for the blood. Bring her here with some trick or illusion, and I'll put the charm on his eyes for when she comes.

ROBIN

I go, I go, look at me go—faster than an arrow from a [Tartar's](#) bow.

ROBIN exits

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 5**OBERON**

(squeezing flower juice into DEMETRIUS 's eyes)

Flower of this purple dye,

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

Enter ROBIN

ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth, mistook by me,
115 Pleading for a lover's fee.

OBERON

(putting flower juice on DEMETRIUS 's eyelids)

You purple flower, hit by Cupid's arrow, sink into the pupils of this man's eyes. When he sees the girl he should love, make her seem as bright to him as the evening star. Young man, when you wake up, if she's nearby, beg her to cure your lovesickness.

ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Helena is nearby, boss. The young man who I mistook for this one is there too, begging her to love him. Should we watch this ridiculous scene? Lord, what fools these mortals are!

Original Text

Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON

Stand aside. The noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

ROBIN

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

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA

LYSANDER

- Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
125 Scorn and derision never come in tears.

Modern Text**OBERON**

Step aside. The noise they're making will wake
up Demetrius.

ROBIN

Then the two of them will both pursue one girl.
That will be funny enough, and preposterous
situations are my favorite thing.

LYSANDER and HELENA enter.

LYSANDER

Why do you think I'm making fun of you when I
tell you I love you? People don't cry when they're
mocking someone.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 6

Look, when I vow, I weep. And vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

HELENA

- 130 You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
135 Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

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

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS

- (waking) O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
140 To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. Oh, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congeal'd white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
145 When thou hold'st up thy hand. Oh, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA

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

Look, when I swear that I love you, I cry, and
when someone cries while he's making a
promise, he's usually telling the truth. How can it
seem like I'm making fun of you, when my tears
prove that I'm sincere?

HELENA

You get trickier and trickier. You've made the
same promises to me and to Hermia—they can't
both be true! They must both be false. The
promises you're making to me belong to Hermia.
Will you abandon her? If you weighed the
promises you made to me against the promises
you made to her, they'd come out the same—
they both weigh nothing. They're lies.

LYSANDER

I wasn't thinking clearly when I made those
promises to her.

HELENA

And I don't believe you're thinking clearly now,
as you break those promises.

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he doesn't love you.

DEMETRIUS

(waking up) Oh Helena, you goddess, you divine
and perfect nymph! What can I compare your
eyes to? Crystal isn't as clear as they are. Oh,
your lips are as ripe as a pair of tempting
cherries touching each other! The pure white of
the snow on a mountaintop seems black as a
crow's wing next to the whiteness of your hands.
Oh, let me kiss your beautiful white hand. It'll
make me so happy!

HELENA

Damn it! I see you're all determined to gang up
on me for a few laughs. If you had any manners

Original Text

If you were civil and knew courtesy,
 150 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, as men you are in show,
 You would not use a gentle lady so

Modern Text

at all, you wouldn't treat me like this. Can't you just hate me, as I know you do? Do you have to get together to humiliate me too? If you were real men, as you pretend to be, you wouldn't treat a lady this way, making vows and promises and praising my beauty when I know you're really both disgusted by me. You're competing for

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 7

155 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia,
 And now both rivals to mock Helena—
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
 160 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
 With your derision! None of noble sort
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.
 165 For you love Hermia. This you know I know.
 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
 In Hermia's love I yield you up my part.
 And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
 Whom I do love and will do till my death.

HELENA

170 Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.
 If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
 My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,
 And now to Helen is it home returned,
 175 There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
 Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.
 Look, where thy love comes. Yonder is thy dear.

Enter HERMIA

HERMIA

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

Hermia's love, and now you're competing to see which one of you can make fun of me the most. That's a great idea, a really manly thing to do—making a poor girl cry! No respectable person would offend an innocent girl just to have some fun.

LYSANDER

Don't be cruel, Demetrius. I know you love Hermia, and you know I know it. Right here, right now, I swear I'm giving up all my claims on her and handing her to you. In exchange, give up your claim to love Helena, since I love her and will love her until I die.

HELENA

Nobody's ever gone to so much trouble just to make fun of someone.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep your Hermia. I don't want her. If I ever loved her, all that love is gone now. My love for her was temporary. Now I'll love Helena forever.

LYSANDER

Helena, it's not true.

DEMETRIUS

Don't insult a deep love that you don't understand, or you'll pay the price. Look, here comes the woman you love.

HERMIA enters.

HERMIA

It's hard to see clearly in the dark of night, but it's easier to hear well.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 8

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found.
 185 Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound
 But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

I couldn't see you, Lysander, but I heard your voice, and that's how I found you. Why did you leave me alone so unkindly?

Original Text**LYSANDER**

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

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
 190 Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
 Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
 Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee
 know
 The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA

195 Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
 Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
 To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.—
 Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!
 Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
 200 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
 When we have chid the hasty-footed time
 For parting us—oh, is it all forgot?
 205 All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
 We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
 210 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry—seeming parted
 But yet an union in partition—
 Two lovely berries molded on one stem;

Modern Text**LYSANDER**

Why stay when love tells you to go?

HERMIA

But what love could make my Lysander leave
 me?

LYSANDER

I had to hurry to my love, beautiful Helena, who
 lights up the night better than all those fiery stars.
 Why are you looking for me? Didn't you figure
 out that I left you because I hate you?

HERMIA

You can't mean what you're saying. It's
 impossible.

HELENA

So, she's in on this too! Now I see that all three
 of them have gotten together to play this cruel
 trick on me. Hurtful Hermia, you ungrateful girl,
 have you conspired with these two to provoke
 me with this horrible teasing? Have you forgotten
 all the talks we've had together, the vows we
 made to be like sisters to one another, all the
 hours we spent together, wishing that we never
 had to say goodbye—have you forgotten? Our
 friendship in our schooldays, our childhood
 innocence? We used to sit together and sew one
 flower with our two needles, sewing it on one
 piece of cloth, sitting on the same cushion,
 singing one song in the same key, as if our
 hands, our sides, our voices and our minds were
 stuck together. We grew together like twin
 cherries—which seemed to be separate but were
 also together—two lovely cherries on one stem.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 9

215 So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
 Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
 Due but to one and crownèd with one crest.
 And will you rent our ancient love asunder
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
 220 It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
 Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

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

HELENA

225 Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face?

We seemed to have two separate bodies, but we
 had one heart. Do you want to destroy our old
 friendship by joining these men to insult your
 poor friend? It's not friendly, and it's not ladylike.
 All women would be angry with you for doing it,
 even though I'm the only one who's hurt by it.

HERMIA

I'm completely dumbfounded by what you're
 saying. I'm not insulting you. It sounds more like
 you're insulting me.

HELENA

Come on, confess. Didn't you send Lysander, as
 an insult, to follow me around praising my eyes

Original Text

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

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

240 Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
 Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
 Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up—
 This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 10

If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
 245 You would not make me such an argument.
 But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
 Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER

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

HELENA

250 Oh, excellent!

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER)

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

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
 255 prayers.—
 Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.
 I swear by that which I will lose for thee
 To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

Modern Text

and my face? Haven't you made your other love,
 Demetrius—who kicked me with his foot not long
 ago—call me a goddess and a divine, rare,
 precious, heavenly creature? Why does he talk
 like that to a girl he can't stand? And why does
 Lysander deny that he loves you, when he loves
 you so deeply? Why would he show me any
 affection, unless you told him to? Why does it
 matter that I'm not as lucky or lovable as you are
 and that the love I feel is unrequited? You should
 pity me for that reason, not hate me.

HERMIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

HELENA

Oh, fine. All right, go ahead, keep up your little
 game, pretend to be sympathetic, but then nudge
 each other and wink and make faces at me when
 I turn my back. Keep up your wonderful game.
 You're doing such a good job on this trick,
 someone should write a book about it.

If you had any sense of pity, or manners, you
 wouldn't pretend to fight over me like this. But
 goodbye. It's partly my own fault, since I followed
 you here. Leaving—or dying—will soon take care
 of everything.

LYSANDER

Stay, lovely Helena. Listen to my excuse. My
 love, my life, my soul, beautiful Helena!

HELENA

That's a good one.

HERMIA

(to LYSANDER) Don't insult her like that,
 Lysander darling.

DEMETRIUS

(to LYSANDER) If Hermia's begging can't make
 you stop insulting Helena, I can force you to do
 so.

LYSANDER

You can't force me any more than Hermia can
 beg me. Your threats are no stronger than her
 whining.—Helena, I love you. I swear I do. I'll
 give my life for you, just to prove this guy wrong
 when he says I don't love you.

DEMETRIUS

I say that I love you more than he does.

LYSANDER

If that's what you say, go fight a duel with me
 and prove it.

Original Text

DEMETRIUS

260 Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

(holds **LYSANDER** back)

LYSANDER

(to **HERMIA**) Away, you Ethiop!

DEMETRIUS

(to **HERMIA**)

No, no. He'll

Seem to break loose.

Modern Text

DEMETRIUS

You're on. Let's do it.

HERMIA

Lysander, where are you going with all this?

(she holds **LYSANDER** back)

LYSANDER

(to **HERMIA**) Get away, you African!

DEMETRIUS

(to **HERMIA**) No, no. He'll act like he's going to break free from you, Hermia.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 11

(to **LYSANDER**)

Take on as you would follow,

265 But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER

(to **HERMIA**) Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA

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

LYSANDER

Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!

270 Out, loathèd medicine! O hated potion, hence!

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS

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

LYSANDER

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

HERMIA

(to **LYSANDER**)

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?

Hate me? Wherefore? O me! What news, my love?

280 Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you loved me. Yet since night you left me.

Why then, you left me—Oh, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,

(to **LYSANDER**) Pretend like you're going to follow me, but then don't come. You're a coward, get out of here!

LYSANDER

(to **HERMIA**) Stop hanging on me, you cat, you thorn. Let go of me, or I'll shake you off like a snake.

HERMIA

Why have you gotten so rude? What's happened to you, my darling?

LYSANDER

Your darling? Get out, you dark-skinned gypsy! Get out, you horrible poison. Get out!

HERMIA

Are you joking?

HELENA

Of course he is, and so are you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I'm ready to fight you as promised.

DEMETRIUS

I wish we had a signed legal contract. I can see you don't keep your promises very well. I don't trust you.

LYSANDER

What? Do you want me to hit Hermia, hurt her, kill her? Sure, I hate her, but I wouldn't hurt her.

HERMIA

(to **LYSANDER**) Can you hurt me any more than by saying you hate me? Hate me? Why? What's happened to you, my love? Am I not Hermia?

Aren't you Lysander? I'm as beautiful now as I was a little while ago. You still loved me when we fell asleep, but when you woke up you left me. So you left me—Oh, God help me!—For real?

LYSANDER

I certainly did, and I never wanted to see you

Original Text

Modern Text

285 And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.

again. So stop hoping and wondering what I mean.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 12

Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me!

290 (to HELENA) You juggler! You canker-blossom!
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i' faith!

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear

295 Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why so?—Ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures. She hath urged her height,

300 And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.—
And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak.

305 How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS)

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me. I was never cursed.

310 I have no gift at all in shrewishness.
I am a right maid for my cowardice.
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

I've spelled it out for you clearly. It's no joke. I hate you and love Helena.

HERMIA

Oh, no! (to HELENA) You trickster, you snake!
You thief! What, did you sneak in at night and steal my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Oh, that's very nice! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! You're going to make me mad enough to answer you? Damn you, you faker, you puppet!

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why "puppet"?—Oh, I see where this is going. She's talking about our difference in height. She's paraded in front of him to show off how tall she is. She won him over with her height.—Does he have such a high opinion of you because I'm so short? Is that it? So how short am I, you painted barber pole? Tell me. How short am I? I'm not too short to gouge your eyes out with my fingernails.

HELENA

(to LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS) Please don't let her hurt me, gentlemen, however much you want to tease me. I never was much good with insults. I'm not mean and catty like her. I'm a nice shy girl. Please don't let her hit me. Maybe you think that because she's shorter than me I can take her.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 13

HERMIA

"Lower"? Hark, again!

HELENA

315 Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

320 He followed you. For love I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence and threatened me
To strike me, spurn me—nay, to kill me too.
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back

HERMIA

"Shorter!" See, she's doing it again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, please don't act so bitter toward me. I always loved you, Hermia, and gave you advice. I never did anything to hurt you—except once, when I told Demetrius that you planned to sneak off into this forest. And I only did that because I loved Demetrius so much. He followed you. And I followed him because I loved him. But he told me to get lost and threatened to hit me, kick me—even kill me. Now just let me go quietly back to Athens. I'll carry my mistakes back with

Original Text

- 325 And follow you no further. Let me go.
You see how simple and how fond I am.
- HERMIA**
Why, get you gone! Who is 't that hinders you?
- HELENA**
A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.
- HERMIA**
What, with Lysander?
- HELENA**
With Demetrius.
- LYSANDER**
- 330 Be not afraid. She shall not harm thee, Helena.
- DEMETRIUS**
(to LYSANDER)
No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.
- HELENA**
Oh, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school.
- 335 And though she be but little, she is fierce.
- HERMIA**
"Little" again? Nothing but "low" and "little"!—
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 14

- LYSANDER**
(to HERMIA) Get you gone, you dwarf,
340 You minimus of hindering knotgrass made,
You bead, you acorn!
- DEMETRIUS**
You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone. Speak not of Helena.
Take not her part. For if thou dost intend
345 Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.
- LYSANDER**
Now she holds me not.
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 jowl.

Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS

- HERMIA**
350 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.

Modern Text

- me. I won't follow you anymore. Please let me go. You see how naïve and foolish I've been.
- HERMIA**
Well, get out of here then! What's keeping you?
- HELENA**
My stupid heart, which I'm leaving behind here.
- HERMIA**
What, you're leaving it with Lysander?
- HELENA**
No, with Demetrius.
- LYSANDER**
Don't be afraid. She can't hurt you, Helena.
- DEMETRIUS**
(to LYSANDER) That's right, Hermia won't hurt Helena even if you try to help her.
- HELENA**
Oh, when you get her angry, she's a good fighter, and vicious too. She was a hellcat in school. And she's fierce, even though she's little.
- HERMIA**
"Little" again? Nothing but "little" and "short"!—
Why are you letting her insult me like this? Let me at her!.

- LYSANDER**
(to HERMIA) Get lost, you dwarf, you tiny little weed, you scrap, you acorn!

- DEMETRIUS**
You're doing too much to defend a woman who wants nothing to do with you. Leave Hermia alone. Don't talk about Helena. Don't take Helena's side. If you continue treating Hermia so badly, you'll pay for it.

- LYSANDER**
Hermia's not holding onto me anymore. Follow me if you're brave enough, and we'll fight over Helena.

- DEMETRIUS**
"Follow"? No, I'll walk right next to you, side by side.

DEMETRIUS and LYSANDER exit.

- HERMIA**
All this fighting is because of you. Stay where you are.
- HELENA**
I'm not sticking around here any more. I don't trust you. You might be a better fighter than I am, but my legs are longer and I can run away faster.

Original Text

My legs are longer though, to run away.

Exit HELENA

HERMIA

355 I am amazed and know not what to say.

Exit HERMIA

OBERON

(to ROBIN) This is thy negligence. Still thou
mistakest,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully.

Modern Text

HELENA exits.

HERMIA

I just can't believe any of this. I don't know what
to say.

HERMIA exits.

OBERON

(to ROBIN) This is all your fault. You make
mistakes constantly, or else you cause this kind
of trouble on purpose.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 15

ROBIN

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

OBERON

365 Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight.
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night.
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
370 As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong.
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius.
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
375 Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.
(gives ROBIN another flower)
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye,
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property
380 To take from thence all error with his might
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
385 With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy.
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

ROBIN

Believe me, King of Illusions, I made a mistake.
Didn't you tell me that I'd be able to recognize
the man by the Athenian clothes he was
wearing? So far I've done exactly what I was
supposed to do—I put the love potion on an
Athenian's eyes. And so far I'm pleased with the
way things have turned out, since I find all of this
commotion very entertaining.

OBERON

As you can see, these lovers are looking for a
place to fight. Hurry up, Robin, and make the
night dark and cloudy. Cover the sky with a low-
hanging fog, as dark as hell, and get these
overeager rivals so completely lost in the woods
that they can't run into each other. Imitate
Lysander's voice and egg Demetrius on with
insults. Then rant for a while in Demetrius's
voice, and egg Lysander on. That way you'll get
them away from each other until they're so
exhausted that they'll sleep like the
dead. (OBERON gives a new flower
to ROBIN) When they're asleep, crush some of
this flower's juice into Lysander's eyes. The
flower's juice has the power to erase all the
damage that's been done to his eyes, and to
make him see normally, the way he used to.
When they wake up, all this trouble and conflict
will seem like a dream or a meaningless vision.
Then the lovers will go back to Athens, united
together until death. While you're busy with that,
I'll go see Queen Titania and ask her once again
for the Indian boy. And then I'll undo the spell
that I cast over her, so she won't be in love with
that monster anymore. Then everything will be
peaceful again.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 16

ROBIN

390 My fairy lord, this must be done with haste.

ROBIN

We've got to act fast, my lord of the fairies.

Original Text

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and
there,

- 395 Troop home to churchyards. Damnèd spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone.
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON

- 400 But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And like a forester the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams,
405 Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But notwithstanding, haste. Make no delay.
We may effect this business yet ere day.

Exit OBERON

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
I am feared in field and town.
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

Modern Text

Night's fading quickly, and in the distance the morning star is shining, warning us that dawn is coming. At dawn, the ghosts that have been wandering around all night go home to the graveyards. The souls of people who weren't buried in holy ground, but instead lie rotting by the side of the road or at the bottom of a river, have already gone back to their wormy graves. They weren't buried in a real graveyard because they committed suicide, and they don't want their shame to be seen in daylight, so they avoid sunlight and stay forever in the darkness of night.

OBERON

But we're not like that. We're a different kind of spirit, and we don't have to run away from the sunlight. I like the morning. I often wander around in the woods like a forest ranger until the sun rises in the fiery red sky over the ocean, turning the salty green water to gold. But you should hurry anyway. Don't delay. We still have time to get all of this done before daybreak.

OBERON exits.

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
The people fear me in the country and the town.
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one of them now.

LYSANDER enters.

LYSANDER

Where are you, Demetrius, you arrogant bastard? Say something.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 17**ROBIN**

- 410 (as DEMETRIUS)
Here, villain. Drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN

(as DEMETRIUS) Follow me then
To plainer ground.

Exit LYSANDER

Enter DEMETRIUS

DEMETRIUS

- Lysander, speak again!
415 Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy
head?

ROBIN

(as LYSANDER) Thou coward, art thou bragging to

ROBIN

(in DEMETRIUS's voice) I'm over here, you villain, with my sword out and ready to fight. Where are you?

LYSANDER

I'm coming.

ROBIN

(in DEMETRIUS's voice) Let's go to a flatter area where we can fight more easily.

LYSANDER exits.

DEMETRIUS enters.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, say something! You coward, did you run away from me? Say something! Are you behind some bush? Where are you hiding?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) You coward, are you

Original Text

the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
420 And wilt not come? Come, recreant. Come, thou child!
I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS

Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN*(as LYSANDER)*

Follow my voice. We'll try no manhood here.

*Exeunt**Enter LYSANDER***LYSANDER**

He goes before me and still dares me on.
425 When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heeled than I.
I followed fast, but faster he did fly,
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

Modern Text

bragging to the stars and telling the bushes that you want a fight, but then you won't come and fight me? Come here, you coward! Come here, you child! I'll beat you with a stick. It would be shameful to fight you with a sword, the way I would fight with a real man.

DEMETRIUS

Are you there?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) Follow my voice. This isn't a good place to fight.

*They exit.**LYSANDER enters.***LYSANDER**

He's walking ahead of me, and he keeps daring me to follow him. When I reach the place he's calling from, he disappears. This villain is much quicker than I am. I ran after him fast, but he ran away from me faster, so that now here I am in some dark part of the forest where the ground is uneven.

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 18

And here will rest me.
430 *(lies down)*
Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.
(sleeps)

*Enter ROBIN and DEMETRIUS***ROBIN***(as LYSANDER to DEMETRIUS)*

435 Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not?

DEMETRIUS

Abide me, if thou darest! For well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

ROBIN440 *(as LYSANDER)* Come hither. I am here.**DEMETRIUS**

Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear
If ever I thy face by daylight see.
Now go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
445 By day's approach look to be visited.
(lies down and sleeps)

Enter HELENA

I'll rest here. *(he lies down)* I hope the pleasant daytime comes soon! As soon as the gray light of early morning appears, I'll find Demetrius and get my revenge for this insult.

LYSANDER lies down and falls asleep. ROBIN and DEMETRIUS enter.

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) Ha, ha, ha! Hey, You coward, why aren't you coming?

DEMETRIUS

Wait for me, if you're not too scared! I know that's why you're running away from me, constantly changing places—you're afraid to stand still and wait for me. You're scared to look me in the eye. Where are you now?

ROBIN

(in LYSANDER's voice) Come here. I'm over here.

DEMETRIUS

No, you're just taunting me. You'll pay for this if I ever see you face-to-face in the daylight. Go wherever you want. I'm exhausted; I need to lie down and sleep on this cold ground. But watch out. I'll find you at dawn. *(DEMETRIUS lies down and sleeps)*

HELENA enters.

Original Text

HELENA

O weary night, O long and tedious night,
 Abate thy hours. Shine comforts from the east,
 That I may back to Athens by daylight
 450 From these that my poor company detest.
 And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
 Steal me awhile from mine own company.
(lies down and sleeps)

Act 3, Scene 2, Page 19

ROBIN

Yet but three? Come one more.
 Two of both kinds make up four.
 Here she comes, cursed and sad.
 Cupid is a knavish lad
 Thus to make poor females mad.

*Enter HERMIA***HERMIA**

Never so weary, never so in woe,
 455 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
 I can no further crawl, no further go.
 My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
 Here will I rest me till the break of day.
 Heavens shield Lysander if they mean a fray!
 460 *(lies down and sleeps)*

ROBIN

On the ground
 Sleep sound.
 I'll apply
 To your eye.
 Gentle lover, remedy.
(squeezes flower juice into LYSANDER's eyes)
 When thou wakest,
 Thou takest
 True delight
 In the sight
 Of thy former lady's eye.
 And the country proverb known—
 That every man should take his own—
 In your waking shall be shown.
 Jack shall have Jill.
 Nought shall go ill.
 The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be
 well.

Exit ROBIN

Modern Text

HELENA

Oh, what a long, tedious, exhausting night! I wish
 it would end. I wish the comforting light of day
 would shine so I can go back to Athens and get
 away from these people who hate me so much. I
 hope I'll be able to sleep and escape my troubles
 for a while. People can sometimes forget their
 difficulties when they're asleep. *(HELENA lies*
down and sleeps)

ROBIN

Only three so far? We're still waiting for one
 more. Two of both kinds makes four. Ah, here
 she comes, angry and sad. Cupid is a bad boy
 for making poor women go crazy like this.

*HERMIA enters.***HERMIA**

I've never been more exhausted or upset. I'm all
 wet from the dew and scratched up by thorns,
 and I can't crawl any farther. I just can't go on.
 My legs can't hold themselves up. I'll sleep here
 until morning. If they do fight, I hope Lysander is
 safe! *(HERMIA lies down and sleeps)*

ROBIN

Sleep well there on the ground. I'll cure you,
 gentle lover, by putting this medicine on your
 eyes. *(ROBIN puts the nectar of the flower*
on LYSANDER's eyelids) When you wake you
 will be truly delighted to see the woman you once
 loved. And when you wake up, you'll be a
 walking illustration of the well-known country
 proverb. "Jack will have Jill and everything will be
 all right."

ROBIN exits.