

A Midsummer Night's Dream

2.1

Enter a Fairy at one door and Robin Goodfellow, a puck, at another

ROBIN

How now, spirit, whither wander you?

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire: 5
I do wander everywhere
Swifter than the moone's sphere,
And I serve the Fairy Queen
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be. 10
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours;
In those freckles live their savours.
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear. 15
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone.
Our Queen and all her elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The King doth keep his revels here tonight.
Take heed the Queen come not within his sight,
For Oberon is passing fell and wroth 20
Because that she, as her attendant, hath
A lovely boy stol'n from an Indian king.
She never had so sweet a changeling;
And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild. 25
But she perforce withholds the love-Ad boy,
Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.
And now they never meet in grove, or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves for fear 30
Creep into acorn cups, and hide them there.

FAIRY

Either I mistake your shape and making quite
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villag'ry, 35
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm±±
Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that `hobgoblin' call you, and `sweet puck', 40
You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
Are not you he?

ROBIN Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, 45
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale. 50
The wisest aunt telling the saddest tale
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum. Down topples she,
And `tailor' cries, and falls into a cough,
And then the whole choir hold their hips, and laugh, 55
And waxen in their mirth, and sneeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.±±
*Enter Oberon the King of Fairies at one door, with
his train, and Titania the Queen at another, with hers*
But make room, fairy: here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here my mistress. Would that he were gone.

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon?±±Fairies, skip hence.
I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

Then I must be thy lady; but I know
When thou hast stol'n away from fairyland 65
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here
Come from the farthest step of India,
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon, 70
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity?

OBERON

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, 75
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna whom he ravisheÁd,
And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa? 80

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy,
And never since the middle summer's spring
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paveÁd fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beacheÁd margin of the sea 85
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs which, falling in the land, 90
Hath every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard. 95
The fold stands empty in the drowneÁd field,
And crows are fattened with the murrain flock.
The nine men's morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable. 100
The human mortals want their winter cheer.

No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound; 105
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds 110
Is, as in mock'ry, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazeÁd world
By their increase now knows not which is which;
And this same progeny of evils comes 115
From our debate, from our dissension.
We are their parents and original.

OBERON

Do you amend it, then. It lies in you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy 120
To be my henchman.

TITANIA Set your heart at rest.

The fairyland buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order,
And in the spiceÁd Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side, 125
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking th'embarkeÁd traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind,
Which she with pretty and with swimming gait 130
Following, her womb then rich with my young squire,
Would imitate, and sail upon the land
To fetch me trifles, and return again
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die; 135
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.
If you will patiently dance in our round, 140
And see our moonlight revels, go with us.
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON

Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom.±±Fairies, away.
We shall chide downright if I longer stay. 145
Exeunt Titania and her train

OBERON

Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.±±
My gentle puck, come hither. Thou rememb'rest
Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back 150
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music?

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not, 155
Flying between the cold moon and the earth
Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throneÁd by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts. 160
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,
And the imperial vot'ress passeÁd on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell. 165
It fell upon a little western flower±±
Before, milk-white; now, purple with love's wound±±
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid 170
Will make or man or woman madly dote

Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. 175

Exit

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 then she waking looks upon±±
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, 180
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape±±
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from off her sight±±
As I can take it with another herb±±
I'll make her render up her page to me. 185
But who comes here? I am invisible,
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter Demetrius, Helena following him

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander, and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me. 190
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood,
And here am I, and wood within this wood
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant, 195
But yet you draw not iron; for my heart
Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
Or rather do I not in plainest truth 200
Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel, and, Demetrius,

The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me, 205
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love±±
And yet a place of high respect with me±±
Than to be useÁd as you use your dog? 210

DEMETRIUS

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit;
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself 215
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night,
And the ill counsel of a desert place,
With the rich worth of your virginity.

HELENA

Your virtue is my privilege, for that 220
It is not night when I do see your face;
Therefore I think I am not in the night,
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company;
For you in my respect are all the world.
Then how can it be said I am alone, 225
When all the world is here to look on me?

DEMETRIUS

I'll run from thee, and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

HELENA

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will. The story shall be changed: 230
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase.
The dove pursues the griffin, the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger: bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues, and valour flies.

DEMETRIUS

I will not stay thy questions. Let me go; 235
Or if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

HELENA

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius,
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex. 240
We cannot fight for love as men may do;
We should be wooed, and were not made to woo.
I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well.

[Exit Demetrius, Helena following him]

OBERON

Fare thee well, nymph. Ere he do leave this grove 245
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

Enter Robin Goodfellow the puck

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

ROBIN

Ay, there it is.

OBERON I pray thee give it me.

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, 250
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamelled skin, 255
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in;
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.
A sweet Athenian lady is in love 260
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove 265
More fond on her than she upon her love;
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN

Fear not, my lord. Your servant shall do so.

Exeunt severally