William Shakespeare

From *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THESEUS*, Duke of Athens*

EGEUS*, father to Hermia*

LYSANDER*, in love with Hermia*

DEMETRIUS*, in love with Hermia*

PHILOSTRATE*, Master of the Revels to Theseus*

QUINCE*, a carpenter*

SNUG*, a joiner*

BOTTOM*, a weaver*

FLUTE*, a bellows-mender*

SNOUT*, a tinker*

STARVELING*, a tailor*

HIPPOLYTA*, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus*

HERMIA*, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander*

HELENA*, in love with Demetrius*

OBERON*, King of the Fairies*

TITANIA*, Queen of the Fairies*

PUCK, *or Robin Goodfellow*

PEASEBLOSSOM*,* COBWEB*,* MOTH*,* MUSTARDSEED*,[Fairies*

Other FAIRIES *attending their king and queen* ATTENDANTS *on Theseus and Hippolyta*

**Scene:** *Athens, and a wood near it.*]

**{ACT II • Scene I}**

(*Enter a Fairy at one door, and Robin Goodfellow*

[*Puck*] *at another.*)

PUCK: How now, spirit! Whither wander you?

FAIRY: Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,

Thorough flood, thorough fire,

I do wander every where,

Swifter than the moon’s sphere;

And I serve the Fairy Queen,

To dew her orbs upon the green.

The cowslips tall her pensioners be.

In their gold coats spots you see;

Those be rubies, fairy favors,

In those freckles live their savors.

I must go seek some dewdrops here

And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I’ll be gone.

Our Queen and all her elves come here anon.

PUCK: The King doth keep his revels here tonight.

Take heed the Queen come not within his sight.

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,

Because that she as her attendant hath

A lovely boy, stolen 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.

But she perforce withholds the loved 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

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

Call’d Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he

That frights the maidens of the villagery,

Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern,

And bootless make the breathless huswife 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,

You do their work, and they shall have good luck.

Are you not he?

PUCK: Thou speakest 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,

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.

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 quire hold their hips and laugh,

And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear

A merrier hour was never wasted there.

But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY: And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

(*Enter* [*Oberon*] *the King of Fairies at one door, with his train; and* [*Titania*] *the Queen at another, with hers.*)

OBERON: Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

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 stolen away from fairy land,

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 steep of India,

But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,

Your buskin’d 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,

Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?

Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night

From Perigenia, whom he ravished?

And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,

With Ariadne and Antiopa?

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 paved fountain or by rushy brook,

Or in the beached margent of the sea,

To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,

But with thy brawls thou hast disturb’d our sport.

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge, have suck’d up from the sea

Contagious fogs; which falling in the land

Hath every pelting river made so proud

That they have overborne their continents.

The ox hath therefore stretch’d his yoke in vain,

The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn

Hath rotted ere his youth attain’d a beard;

The fold stands empty in the drowned field,

And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;

The nine men’s morris is fill’d up with mud,

And the quaint mazes in the wanton green

For lack of tread are undistinguishable.

The human mortals want their winter here;

No night is now with hymn or carol bless’d.

Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,

Pale in her anger, washes all the air,

That rheumatic diseases do abound.

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

Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,

The childing autumn, angry winter, change

Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,

By their increase, now knows not which is which.

And this same progeny of evils comes

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,

To be my henchman.

TITANIA: Set your heart at rest.

The fairy land buys not the child of me.

His mother was a vot’ress of my order,

And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,

Full often hath she gossip’d by my side,

And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,

Marking th’ embarked traders on the flood,

When we have laugh’d to see the sails conceive

And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;

Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,

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;

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

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.

(*Exeunt* [*Titania with 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

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.

PUCK: I remember.

OBERON: That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,

Flying between the cold moon and the earth,

Cupid all arm’d. A certain aim he took

At a fair vestal throned by the west,

And loos’d his love-shaft smartly from his bow,

As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;

But I might see young Cupid’s fiery shaft

Quench’d in the chaste beams of the wat’ry moon,

And the imperial vot’ress passed on,

In maiden meditation, fancy-free.

Yet mark’d I where the bolt of Cupid fell:

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 flow’r; the herb I showed thee once.

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid

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.

PUCK: I’ll put a girdle round about the earth

In forty minutes.

[*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,

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.

But who comes here? I am invisible,

And I will overhear their conference.

(*Enter Demetrius, Helena following him.*)