

A Midsummer Night's Dream, by William Shakespeare
Being Most Shamelessly Condensed for a Small Company and Limited Duration
by Jennifer Moser Jurling
With Mechanics Set Forth for Use in the Role-Playing Game
The Play's the Thing, by Mark Truman
With Thanks to MIT for <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/>

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

OBERON, king of Faerie. Part: Faerie. Plot: Betrayer to Titania. Prop: Lantern.
PUCK, servant to Oberon. Part: Faerie. Plot: Sworn to Oberon. Prop: Disguise.
TITANIA: queen of Faerie. Part: Faerie. Plot: Rival to Oberon. Prop: Coin.
THESEUS: duke of Athens. Part: Ruler. Plot: In Love with Hippolyta. Prop: Crown.
HIPPOLYTA: queen of Amazons. Part: Maiden. Plot: In Love with Theseus. Prop: Crown.
PETER QUINCE: director, Athens Acting Guild. Part: Hero. Plot: Rival to Nick Bottom. Prop: Letter.
NICK BOTTOM: actor in the guild. Part: Fool. Plot: Rival to Peter Quince. Prop: Lantern.
SNUG: actor in the guild. Part: Commoner. Plot: Friend to Peter Quince. Prop: Disguise.

Note to Playwright: You may wish to use "In Love with Hippolyta" as Oberon's starting plot and "In Love with Theseus" as Titania's starting plot. Of course, these can also be added later or not at all.

ACT I

Faerie king Oberon and his queen, Titania, quarrel. (Titania has a changeling human boy among her attendants, and she refuses to let him be one of Oberon's henchmen. They also argue over Oberon's love for Hippolyta and Titania's love for Theseus.) Oberon enlists his servant Puck to fetch a flower that will enable him to cast a love spell on Titania, so that she will fall in love with a monstrous beast.

ACT II

Duke Theseus and Hippolyta are excited about their upcoming wedding day. Peter Quince, Nick Bottom and Snug, of the Athens Acting Guild, are preparing to put on the play "Pyramus and Thisby" for the wedding banquet. Nick Bottom is to play Pyramus (the hero), Peter Quince is to play Thisby (Pyramus' lady-love) and Snug is to play the lion. Peter Quince and Nick Bottom squabble, but they all agree to meet in the forest to rehearse.

ACT III

Oberon and Puck cast their spell on Titania while the actors are rehearsing nearby. Puck is amused by the actors' arguments and gives Nick Bottom a donkey's head. The other actors are frightened and run away. Titania falls in love with the bewitched Nick Bottom while Puck watches and laughs.

ACT IV

After enjoying Titania's adoration of Nick Bottom, Oberon relents and removes the spell. He and Titania depart from Nick Bottom's vicinity and make up. Nick Bottom, with no further evidence of his fantastical adventure, wanders back to town.

ACT V

Despite skepticism from the Duke and Duchess, Peter Quince, Nick Bottom and Snug perform their play. (Thisby is frightened away from the rendezvous point by a lion, which chews the cloak she left behind. Pyramus finds the bloodied cloak, jumps to conclusions and stabs himself. Thisby finds his body and stabs herself.) The actors receive praise from the Duke and Duchess. Puck gives an epilogue.

ACT I

Summary: Faerie king Oberon and his queen, Titania, quarrel. (Titania has a changeling human boy among her attendants, and she refuses to let him be one of Oberon's henchmen. They also argue over Oberon's love for Hippolyta and Titania's love for Theseus.) Oberon enlists his servant Puck to fetch a flower that will enable him to cast a love spell on Titania, so that she will fall in love with a monstrous beast.

Set: Nature. Place: Forest Glade.

OBERON and PUCK are reveling together.

PUCK

The king doth keep his revels here to-night:
Take heed the queen come not within his sight.

Enter TITANIA.

OBERON

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

Act II

Summary: Duke Theseus and Hippolyta are excited about their upcoming wedding day. Peter Quince, Nick Bottom and Snug, of the Athens Acting Guild, are preparing to put on the play "Pyramus and Thisby" for the wedding banquet. Nick Bottom is to play Pyramus (the hero), Peter Quince is to play Thisby (Pyramus' lady-love) and Snug is to play the lion. Peter Quince and Nick Bottom squabble, but they all agree to meet in the forest to rehearse.

Set: Palace. Places: the Throne Room, a Small Plain Workroom.

THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA are in the Throne Room. PETER QUINCE, NICK BOTTOM and SNUG are in the Small Plain Workroom.

THESEUS

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon.

HIPPOLYTA

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time.

PETER 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.

SNUG

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

NICK 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 'Let him roar again,
let him roar again.'

PETER QUINCE

You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a
sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a
summer's day.

Act III

Summary: Oberon and Puck cast their spell on Titania while the actors are rehearsing nearby. Puck is amused by the actors' arguments and gives Nick Bottom a donkey's head. The other actors are frightened and run away. Titania falls in love with the bewitched Nick Bottom while Puck watches and laughs.

Set: Nature. Places: Titania's Bower, Rehearsal Clearing.

TITANIA sleeps in her bower while OBERON and PUCK watch. In the Rehearsal Clearing nearby, PETER QUINCE, NICK BOTTOM and SNUG are rehearsing.

OBERON

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take.
When thou wakest, it is thy dear:
Wake when some vile thing is near.

PUCK

Lord, what fools these mortals be!

SNUG

O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted.

PETER QUINCE

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

TITANIA

What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?
Thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

NICK BOTTOM

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

ACT IV

Summary: After enjoying Titania's adoration of Nick Bottom, Oberon relents and removes the spell. He and Titania depart from Nick Bottom's vicinity and make up. Nick Bottom, with no further evidence of his fantastical adventure, wanders back to town.

Set: Nature. Places: Titania's Bower, a nearby Glade.

In her bower, TITANIA coos over a sleeping NICK BOTTOM while PUCK and OBERON watch and laugh.

OBERON

Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see.

TITANIA

My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

NICK BOTTOM

I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of
this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream,
because it hath no bottom.

ACT V

Summary: Despite skepticism from the Duke and Duchess, Peter Quince, Nick Bottom and Snug perform their play. (Thisby is frightened away from the rendezvous point by a lion, which chews the cloak she left behind. Pyramus finds the bloodied cloak, jumps to conclusions and stabs himself. Thisby finds his body and stabs herself.) The actors receive praise from the Duke and Duchess. Puck gives an epilogue.

Set: Palace. Place: Wedding Banquet.

THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA recline before a stage. NICK BOTTOM and PETER QUINCE stand upon the stage, dressed as Pyramus and Thisby. SNUG is on a separate area of the stage, dressed as the lion.

THESEUS

'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisby;
Very tragical mirth.'
Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!

HIPPOLYTA

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

SNUG

You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am.

HIPPOLYTA

A very gentle beast, of a good conscience.

THESEUS

No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no
excuse. It is a fine tragedy, and very notably discharged.

Enter PUCK.

PUCK

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.