

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

ACT 1

Scene 1

Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hyppolyta, Queen of the Amazons talk about how near their wedding day is.

Egeus enters to complain that his daughter Hermia will not marry the man of his choice (Demetrius) because she is in love with Lysander. The lovers have a chance to put their case. Demetrius used to love Helena - who still dotes on him - so Hermia and Lysander think he should return to her. But he is besotted with Hermia. Egeus has no particular dislike of Lysander but is determined his daughter will do as he wants. He asks Theseus for his judgement which is:

Hermia should obey her father. If she doesn't, she will either be put to death or sent to a nunnery. He disapproves of rashness, disobedience and disorder and it was the custom at that time to be ruled by your father's wishes.

Lysander and Hermia decide to elope and arrange to meet in the wood that night. Helena enters and they confide in her - Helena having been Hermia's best friend since childhood.

Helena decides to tell Demetrius of their plan, hoping he will love her for telling him.

Scene 2

The mechanicals (Quince, Snug, Bottom, Flute and Snout) discuss the play they want to perform for the wedding of Theseus and Hyppolyta. Bottom wants to play all the parts. They are very cautious that they don't offend or frighten the ladies in the audience. Having sorted out the story, they agree to meet in the wood that night to practise.

ACT 2

Scene 1

In the wood we meet Puck (Robin Goodfellow) who is a servant of Oberon, King of the fairies. He tells another fairy that Oberon and Titania, Queen of the fairies, have fallen out because she will not give him an Indian boy she has as her attendant. We find out that Oberon "guards" Hyppolyta and Titania "guards" Theseus.

Titania and Oberon meet. She announces she will no longer sleep with him. The result of the fairies' quarrel is chaos and disorder in the land. Jobs and leisure pursuits are ruined by the weather. Seasons are all turned about. Oberon asks again for the Indian boy but Titania refuses and leaves.

Oberon calls Puck to perform a trick on Titania. He is to collect juice from a rare flower to squeeze onto her eyelids when she sleeps so that when she wakes she will fall madly in love with the first thing she sees - hopefully a monkey. Puck leaves to find the flower and Oberon listens as Demetrius enters followed by Helena.

He is vile to her as she pleads with him to love her. When they leave Oberon orders Puck to put some of the juice on the eyelids of the man in Athenian dress so that when he wakes he will see Helena and love her.

Scene 2

Titania and her fairy band dance, sing then sleep. Oberon squeezes flower juice on her eyelids and leaves.

Hermia and Lysander enter and decide to sleep in the wood that night. Hermia tells Lysander to sleep further away from her as she is concerned about her reputation even though they are eloping. Reluctantly he does.

Puck enters and seeing Lysander in Athenian clothes, mistakenly assumes him to be the man mentioned by Oberon and puts juice on his eyelids.

Demetrius and Helena enter. He orders her to leave him alone while he continues his search for Her-

mia. He stalks off and she lies down and sleeps without noticing Hermia and Lysander.

Lysander wakes and sees Helena! He proclaims his love for her but Helena thinks he is teasing and runs off, Lysander pursuing her. Hermia wakes to find she's alone and goes to look for Lysander.

ACT 3

Scene 1

Still in the wood with Titania lying asleep. The mechanicals enter to practise their play but are still worried it might be too frightening for the ladies so they decide to have a number of prologues before the "gory" bits explaining that the killing and the lion are not real. Bottom plays the part of Pyramus the lover. He says his first lines then exits promising Thisby (the woman he loves) that he will be back shortly. Puck, who has been watching, decides it would be good fun to give Bottom the head of an ass so when he returns the other mechanicals run away in fright. Bottom can't understand why so he paces up and down singing and wakes Titania.

She falls in love with him and orders her fairies to wait on him. Bottom rather likes this and is led off to Titania's bower where she showers him with promises of love.

Scene 2

Puck tells Oberon what he has done - he is pleased that Titania is in love with a monster with an asses head. He also reports putting the magic juice on the eyelids of the Athenian. Here he comes now says Oberon.

Hermia and Demetrius enter and Puck realises this is not the same man. Demetrius is still declaring his love for Hermia who is worried about Lysander and assumes Demetrius has murdered him. She runs off saying she hates Demetrius. He sits sorrowfully and falls asleep. Oberon tells Puck to bring Helena to place while he squeezes juice onto Demetrius' eyelids to rectify the mistake.

*Lysander and Helena enter, Lysander swearing he loves her. Helena is annoyed at his betrayal of Hermia. They make so much noise that Demetrius wakes and immediately falls in love with Helena! She thinks they are both mocking her - taking the mickey. Lysander tells Demetrius he can have Hermia but of course he no longer wants her.

Hermia enters, demanding to know why Lysander left her. He says he hates her. Hermia is puzzled but Helena thinks she is part of this conspiracy to make fun of her and reminds her of their childhood friendship, saying this is no way to treat her now.

The men squabble over who loves Helena most and Lysander insults Hermia nastily. Hermia then accuses Helena of stealing Lysander away from her by saying she is dwarfish and dark in comparison to her (Helena's) own tall fair beauty. Poor Helena is even more confused and thinks Hermia will attack her but the men jump in to protect her. They agree to go and fight one another to see who should win Helena and leave.

Helena runs away, afraid of being left with Hermia. Hermia wanders off upset and puzzled.*

Oberon and Puck realise they'll have to do something about this mix-up. Oberon sends Puck to lead the two men apart and gives him a herb which will restore Lysander to his former love for Hermia. He, meanwhile, will try to persuade Titania to give up the Indian boy again. They do not have much time because it is almost dawn. Oberon leaves.

Lysander enters and Puck lures him to one side by mimicking Demetrius' voice. He does the same with Demetrius, keeping him away from Lysander. The two men spend so much time looking for each other they grow tired and sleep.

Helena enters making her way sadly back to Athens. She too sleeps. Warily Hermia enters and also lies down hoping Demetrius will not harm her beloved Lysander. Puck puts the crushed herb on Lysander's eyelids.

ACT 4

Scene 1

Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia and Helena are still asleep on stage. None of them knows the others are there.

Bottom orders the fairies about while Titania panders to his every need. They eventually fall asleep in each others arms.

Oberon and Puck enter. Oberon says that Titania has changed her mind about the Indian boy so he will take the spell off her. He orders Puck to remove the asses head from Bottom.

Titania wakes and looks at Bottom in disgust. She and Oberon depart hand in hand along with the other fairies leaving Bottom asleep.

Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus enter to take part in a hunt. They notice the lovers asleep and assume they have come into the wood early to join the hunt. Theseus reminds Egeus that Hermia must agree to marry Demetrius today.

The 4 are woken by the hunting horns and are all rather puzzled. Lysander confesses that he and Hermia were eloping and Egeus demands that he be punished. Demetrius says he no longer wants to marry Hermia and is in love with Helena. This seems to solve all the problems and Theseus declares all 3 couples will be married that day. Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus leave. The 4 lovers all assume they must have been dreaming and follow.

Bottom wakes and he too thinks the asses head was but a dream.

Scene 2

Quince, Flute, Snout, Starveling and Snug are all worried about Bottom's disappearance. He turns up and urges them all to Theseus' palace to perform the play.

ACT 5

Scene 1

Theseus and Hippolyta discuss the strange story they have heard and conclude that all is now well because the lovers have learned some sense, particularly that rash hot-headed love is not as good as the adult, 'sensible' and constant love that Theseus and Hippolyta feel for each other. The lovers enter. Philostrate (master of the revels to Theseus) comes in to tell them there is a play for their entertainment. He has seen it and says it is dreadful but Theseus insists that it is performed.

It is - and is predictably dreadful. All the way through Theseus and Demetrius make sarcastic remarks and all 6 of them are beside themselves with laughter at the sheer awfulness of it.

At the end, Bottom asks if they would like to see the epilogue but Theseus says it is bedtime and the newly married couples leave along with the mechanicals.

Puck, Oberon and Titania enter with the fairies. Oberon orders the fairies to the rooms of the newly-weds to bless them and to ensure they produce children who are lucky in life. They all leave except for Puck who remains to deliver an epilogue which is rather like Quince's prologue but much more eloquent!

THE END