

PLOT SUMMARY OF *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, are arranging the celebrations for their forthcoming wedding on Midsummer Eve. Egeus spoils the festive mood by complaining to Theseus that his daughter Hermia has refused to marry Demetrius, the husband he has chosen for her, and invokes the Athenian law: she must either obey her father, or else be condemned to death – or to life as a nun. Hermia and her lover Lysander decide to elope, and confide their plans to Helena, Hermia's best friend, who is herself in love with Demetrius, despite his previously rejecting her for Hermia. Hoping to win Demetrius's favour, Helena now reveals their elopement to him. Total confusion follows as all four of them escape to the enchanted forest – Demetrius pursuing Hermia, Helena pursuing Demetrius, and Hermia pursuing Lysander, from whom she has become separated.

Oberon, King of the Fairies, and his Queen Titania, are also in the forest, waiting to attend Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding. After a quarrel over Titania's refusal to surrender her Indian page-boy to him, Oberon seeks to punish her disobedience. He instructs the goblin Puck to drop the juice of a magical flower on the eyes of the sleeping Titania which will make her fall in love with the first creature she sees on awaking. Puck is also ordered to do the same to Demetrius, whom Oberon has seen cruelly rejecting Helena –but the goblin mistakenly enchants

Lysander instead, who wakes up and immediately falls in love with Helena. The confusion deepens as the lovers quarrel, and lose one another in the night-time maze of the forest.

Meanwhile, a group of Athenian workers have entered the forest to rehearse the inept play they are to perform at Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding, the inappropriately tragic story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Puck interrupts their rehearsal, however, and transforms the weaver Nick Bottom's head into a donkey's. Titania awakens to this sight, and lavishes her love on him, blissfully unaware though he remains of his transformation. Out of this comic chaos order is gradually restored. Oberon gets his Indian page-boy, and releases Titania, Bottom, and the four Athenian lovers from their magical bondage. Demetrius at last proclaims his true love for Helena, leaving Hermia free to marry Lysander, since Theseus now overrules Egeus, and commands the two reunited couples to join the ceremony of his own wedding to Hippolyta. The three happy couples enjoy the spectacle of the workers' ridiculously bad play before retiring for the night. The sleeping newlyweds are blessed with a happy future by the reconciled Oberon and Titania, the night's final visitors. But has it all been a dream?

