

A Midsummer Night's Synopsis (Spoilers ahead!)

Shakespeare's Act One:

In Athens, Duke Theseus is preparing for his wedding to Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. He won her hand by defeating her in battle, but there is still some work to do to win her heart. Suddenly, Egeus, a nobleman and father to Hermia, bursts into the court demanding an audience with Theseus. He asserts that he wants his daughter to marry a young nobleman named Demetrius, but another young nobleman, Lysander has wooed Hermia without his permission. According to Athenian law, Hermia must marry the man her father chooses, or she will be put to death. Hermia defiantly proclaims that she will never marry Demetrius. Lysander argues that Demetrius had already vowed his love to Helena (Hermia's best friend), but he broke her heart. Theseus decrees that Hermia has until his wedding day (4 days) to decide whether she will marry Demetrius, become a nun, or die the death.

Defiantly, Hermia and Lysander secretly plan to flee Athens. They confide only in Helena, but Helena thinks if she tells Demetrius about their secret, he will love her again. Her plan backfires, and Demetrius chases after Hermia and Lysander through the forest...and Helena chases after Demetrius.

In another part of Athens, six "rude mechanicals" (Peter Quince the carpenter, Nick Bottom the weaver, Francis Flute the bellows-mender, Tom Snout the tinker, Snug the joiner, and Robin Starveling the tailor) have decided to put on a play in honor of Duke Theseus's wedding day. This blue-collar crew are not the best actors, but their director Quince thinks he has things well in-hand. The leading actor of the company, Bottom, wants to play all the parts, but eventually roles are handed out. They agree to meet in the forest to rehearse in secret.

Shakespeare's Act Two:

Meanwhile, deep in the forest, another world is in turmoil. The land of the fairies has been divided because the King and Queen of the fairy kingdom, Oberon and Titania, are fighting over custody of a little changeling child. Their terrible arguments are so bad that they create devastating changes in the weather and seasons, putting the human world out of whack. Oberon is so angry about Titania's refusal to give up the child that he orders his henchman, Robin Goodfellow (aka "Puck"), to find a magical flower that Cupid shot with his arrow and use it to punish Titania. The flower's magic is so strong that its droplets will

make people fall madly in love with the next thing they see. The plot is hatched to drop the love potion from the flower into Titania's eyes, make her fall in love with something terrible (like a bull or a monkey), and while she is distracted, take back the changeling child.

While Puck goes to get the magical flower, Oberon observes Helena and Demetrius arguing in the forest. Demetrius is so cruel to Helena, but she still begs him to love her again. He runs off, Helena fast on his heels, and the chase continues. Oberon decides that since he will soon have the magic flower, he will do some good with it, too, and drop the love potion in Demetrius's eye when Helena is the next thing he'll see so that he will love her again.

When Puck returns with the flower, Oberon instructs him to find the man in Athenian garments being followed by the lovesick maid, but Puck comes upon Hermia and Lysander first. Mistaking them for Helena and Demetrius, Puck puts the love potion in Lysander's eye. As fate would have it, Helena finds Hermia and Lysander sleeping and wakes Lysander up. He instantly falls in love with Helena and abandons Hermia alone in the woods. When Hermia wakes up and sees he's gone, she goes through the woods to find him.

In another part of the forest, Titania and her fairy attendants are in her bower preparing for bedtime. Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed sing their queen a lullaby, and she lays down to sleep. Oberon sneaks in and drops the love potion in her eyes.

Shakespeare's Act Three:

Meanwhile, at the Duke's Oak (which is very near to Titania's bower), the Mechanicals are in rehearsal for their play. Puck happens upon them and decides to have a little fun. He puts a spell on Bottom to turn his head into a donkey's head, and chaos ensues, sending the Mechanicals running in every direction. What should happen next? Titania wakes up, sees Bottom, and falls immediately in love with a donkey.

When Oberon discovers that Puck has made a mistake and anointed the wrong young lover's eyes with the potion, he is furious and sets about to fix the problem. He finds Demetrius sleeping, drops the potion into his eyes, and tells Puck to lead Helena to where he lies so that he will see her when he wakes. Along comes Helena, followed by the lovesick Lysander, and Demetrius wakes up. Now, Helena has TWO suitors (which she believes to be a cruel joke they are playing on her). Hermia finds the three of them, and a wild argument erupts with Helena thinking they are all ganging up on her, Hermia thinking Helena has stolen Lysander's heart, and Demetrius and Lysander ready to fight to the death to win Helena's hand. Oberon and Puck watch this unfold, and Oberon angrily demands that Puck fix his mistake.

Puck drops a fog upon the forest and leads the lovers around and around in it. One by one, he puts them to sleep. Puck gives Lysander the antidote to the love potion, so that when they wake, they will each be in love with the right person again.

Shakespeare's Act Four:

Oberon and Puck go to find Titania and Bottom. When Oberon sees how foolishly Titania dotes on a donkey, he begins to pity his queen. Since she had already agreed to give him the changeling child, he decides to give her the antidote as well. She wakes from the spell and decides to forgive Oberon. They go off together to bless Duke Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding. Puck turns Bottom back into a man, and Bottom recounts the incredible "dream" that he had.

In the morning, Duke Theseus, Hippolyta, and Hermia's father Egeus are hunting in the forest. They discover the four lovers asleep, and wake them up. Lysander loves Hermia again, Demetrius vows to love Helena just as he did before, and Theseus decrees that love will win the day, overruling Egeus's will that Hermia marry Demetrius, and inviting the (now) happy couples to share his wedding day.

Meanwhile back in Athens, the Mechanicals have been frantically searching for the transformed Bottom with no luck. They fear the worst, and they know they can't do their play without him. Suddenly, he returns to great celebration and announces that their play has indeed been picked to be performed at the Duke's wedding! Off the Mechanicals go to get ready for their show.

Shakespeare's Act Five:

At the Duke's palace, impatient Theseus wants some entertainment to kill the time until his wedding night. His servant Philostrate tells him there is a *terrible* play he could watch, but insists he won't enjoy it. Theseus and Hippolyta decide to watch it anyway. The Mechanicals perform their ridiculous *Pyramus and Thisbe* (complete with heckling from the Duke and his bride) at the wedding feast. As the play within the play ends and night falls, the fairies arrive to bless the newly wedded couples. All live happily ever after!

In the epilogue, Puck tells the audience that everything they have seen play out was merely a fantastic dream. He hopes the story pleased them, but assures the audience that he will mend it if they disliked it.