

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Adapted by Tanya Mishell
from the original story by William Shakespeare

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Cast of Characters

HELENA – Lady from Athens in love with Demetrius

HERMIA – Lady from Athens in love with Lysander

LYSANDER – Gentleman from Athens love with Hermia

DEMETRIUS – Gentleman from Athens, also in love with Hermia

OBERON – King spirit of the forest

TITANIA – Queen of the forest fairies

PUCK – Subject of the king and queen, given a special assignment (male or female)

FAIRIES/FOREST CREATURES – Optional background actors (males and/or females)

Setting

Long ago; a midsummer night in an enchanted forest.

ACT I

Scene 1

An enchanted forest long ago. Forest creatures and fairies may come and go based on the director's discretion.

LYSANDER. Hermia, let us run away this midsummer night and get married.

HERMIA. I do love you Lysander, but what about my father? He is determined I will marry Demetrius. Our families agreed on the match years ago.

LYSANDER. You should be able to marry as you wish.

HERMIA. If only I could, but these are the times we live in. I have no say in the matter.

LYSANDER. All the more reason to elope! Afterwards it will be too late to be undone. We will be married and no one can stop us from being together.

HERMIA. My father would be mad at us forever, and Demetrius would want you dead!

LYSANDER. I can handle Demetrius – and your father.

HERMIA. Yes, I know, but I do not like strife. How I wish father could accept our love and give us his blessing.

LYSANDER. You know that is not likely. Please my love, come with me now and let us go to the home of the priest. Otherwise your father may marry you off tomorrow, and all hopes of our happiness will be lost.

HERMIA. (Sighs, troubled. Then becomes joyful.) Very well then. Let us marry tonight. For if not tonight, it may be never.

(HERMIA and LYSANDER exit. DEMETRIUS enters looking for HERMIA.)

DEMETRIUS. Hermia? Where are you? Your father has given his blessing, and we can marry next month! Or next week, or tomorrow, or even right now! Yes, we should marry right now, on this midsummer night! Hermia? Hermia?

(DEMETRIUS walks around looking for HERMIA. HELENA enters.)

HELENA. Demetrius, why do you long for Hermia? My friend is charming, but she does not love you. Why would you chase after someone who rejects you? I offer you all that I am and all I can give. You have my love and yet you throw it away.

DEMETRIUS. Helena, you are a dear girl. Any man would be lucky to have you for a wife.

HELENA. Then why do you not want me, if I am as virtuous as you say?

DEMETRIUS. I do not know. It makes no sense. You would be very good for me.

HELENA. Yes I would.

DEMETRIUS. There's just something about Hermia.

HELENA. Maybe you only want what you cannot have. Why would you chase after misery?

DEMETRIUS. Misery makes me feel alive.

HELENA. Couldn't you feel alive being happy?

DEMETRIUS. I seem to have the flaw of wanting someone who does not want me.

HELENA. I could cure you from that flaw.

DEMETRIUS. How can you cure me, when you have the same flaw? You chase me as I chase Hermia.

HELENA. (Very thoughtful.) You are right, I also seek that which avoids me. Why do we choose such difficulty?

DEMETRIUS. I do not know. For even if Hermia marries me I will always wonder if she still loves Lysander. And if I marry you . . .

HELENA. I would always wonder if you really love Hermia. Even if we get what we want, we would still be unhappy.

DEMETRIUS. Maybe misery is what we need . . . or we would not be seeking it so.

HELENA. That makes no sense. And yet somehow it does.

(OBERON and TITANIA enter, one from one side and the other from another side. They watch silently. The humans - DEMETRIUS, HELENA, LYSANDER and HERMIA - never see OBERON, TITANIA, PUCK or any of the other forest creatures because these characters are part of the fairy/spirit world of the forest.)

DEMETRIUS. I must then go and find my misery – I mean, my Hermia.

HELENA. And I will stay and await my own misery – I mean, you.

DEMETRIUS. We both sound crazy. Maybe we do belong together.

(DEMETRIUS exits. HELENA stays behind for a moment, wishing, and then exits. TITANIA and OBERON move in from the sidelines after watching the humans.)

OBERON. Do you ever tire of helping the humans, Titania?

TITANIA. It is what we do Oberon. You are king spirit of the forest, and I am queen of the fairies. We have a duty to help the humans.

OBERON. Despite the fact that they keep bringing trouble upon themselves?

TITANIA. Of course.

OBERON. They are very unwise. I say they deserve what they get.

TITANIA. Why should we not make their lives easier if we can? We have the wisdom and the ability.

OBERON. Well, what do you suggest for this little mess we just saw? Two men in love with one maiden, and two people chasing someone who rejects them.

TITANIA. I am so glad to be single.

OBERON. This is not about you, Titania.

TITANIA. Oh, right. But this is easy to fix.

OBERON. Good! Fix it!

TITANIA. When did I become your secretary? I have my own side of the forest to tend to.

OBERON. This happened in the middle of the forest, so it falls on both of us to do something about it.

TITANIA. Oh, I see. You're right.

OBERON. Of course I am right!

TITANIA. I will support any decision you make.

OBERON. Yes you will!

TITANIA. Go ahead, make a decision.

OBERON. I asked you to make the decision. That is my decision.

TITANIA. How convenient for you.

OBERON. I am a very good delegator.

TITANIA. Very well. It is a simple math equation you see. One in love with one makes two, two in love with two makes four, and two in love with one makes a love triangle.

OBERON. And I thought I would never need algebra.

TITANIA. Just call Puck, and I will handle the rest.

OBERON. I thought Puck was doing some chores for you.

TITANIA. I was told Puck was doing work for you.

OBERON. Here we go again. Puck! Puck! (PUCK enters, apparently after having had a good time. Additional background actors as fairies and forest creatures may enter with PUCK.) Where have you been Puck?

PUCK. Dancing and singing on a summer night. I mean, I was doing chores for Titania.

TITANIA. I did not see you in my side of the forest.

PUCK. That's because I was doing chores for Oberon.

OBERON. Puck, you do realize we are both here.

PUCK. Of course!

TITANIA. And you expect us to believe you?

PUCK. Not really, no.

OBERON. Puck, we need you to focus, pay attention, and tend to a very special assignment.

PUCK. Sure! Of course! Focus. Attention. Assignment. Got it. I'm off to work!

(PUCK begins to exit.)

TITANIA. Puck, where are you going?

PUCK. To do the assignment.

OBERON. Would you like to know what the assignment is?

PUCK. Not really, no.

TITANIA. It involves helping the humans.

PUCK. Again?

OBERON. She says that we must.

PUCK. Are *you* not king?

OBERON. Of course I am.

PUCK. Then can't you overrule her?

OBERON. (Taking PUCK to the side.) That is never a good idea.

PUCK. Why not? Just tell her that . . .

OBERON. (Interrupting PUCK.) The last time I argued with her, she made it rain and sleet for a month. Remember the flooding?

PUCK. I don't like rain and sleet. It interferes with my fun.

TITANIA. What did you say Puck?

PUCK. I said, how can I help these pitiful humans?

TITANIA. (Handing PUCK a small bag.) You will sprinkle this fairy dust on Demetrius and put a spell on him, so that he may fall in love with Helena instead of Hermia. And then . . .

PUCK. (To OBERON, interrupting TITANIA.) She talks a lot, doesn't she?

OBERON. (To PUCK.) Do you know what to do?

PUCK. I'll figure it out.

TITANIA. Why are you both ignoring me?

OBERON. We are not ignoring you, we are just - putting your plan into action.

PUCK. Yeah, whatever. I'm off to get the humans out of trouble – again.

TITANIA. Thank you Puck.

OBERON. Let me know how it goes.

PUCK. (To OBERON.) Can I stop first to see some friends? You see they're all meeting at this meadow . . .

OBERON. Go!

PUCK. I'll take that as a no. Or as a yes!

(PUCK exits.)

TITANIA. A free spirit, that one.

OBERON. To put it mildly.

TITANIA. Well, I must return to my half of the forest to check on things.

OBERON. I shall see you soon Titania. Hopefully all will go well with the humans.

TITANIA. They are silly creatures, but with our help they usually find their way.

(OBERON and TITANIA gesture a respectful bow to one another and exit separately.
LYSANDER and HERMIA enter.)

HERMIA. Lysander, I am so very tired. How much longer to the house of the priest?

LYSANDER. It is still far away. Let us rest a while and continue our journey after some sleep. I will be nearby if you need me.

HERMIA. Thank you. Yes, I must sleep.

(HERMIA and LYSANDER lie down in separate areas and go to sleep. DEMETRIUS enters and sees HERMIA.)

DEMETRIUS. Hermia my love! There you are. I have been searching for you!

HERMIA. (Waking up. LYSANDER continues to sleep.) Demetrius, what are you doing here!

DEMETRIUS. I could ask you the same question. Your father has given his blessing for us to marry. I want us to be together at once.

HERMIA. But you know I love Lysander. Why do you want someone who does not love you?

DEMETRIUS. I feel like I just had this conversation.

HERMIA. Helena loves you, and she is my dear friend and a good person. Why not give her a chance to make you happy?

DEMETRIUS. Because I want you. Besides, our families agreed to our match years ago. The easiest thing to do is to marry.

HERMIA. But I want love, not just ease.

DEMETRIUS. You mean to defy your father?

HERMIA. Yes, I do. Besides, in a few hours it will be too late anyway.

DEMETRIUS. Too late for what?

HERMIA. It – it is too late to talk about this. I must sleep.

DEMETRIUS. Why are you sleeping in the forest tonight? Are you not fearful being all alone?

HERMIA. (Hesitant, HERMIA looks LYSANDER's way. DEMETRIUS does not see LYSANDER sleeping in another area.) There is nothing to fear in the forest. And even if there was, the fairies will keep me safe.

DEMETRIUS. I do not believe in fairies, but *I* will keep you safe. Sleep soundly and rest. We will marry in the morning.

HERMIA. Please just go Demetrius, I am too tired to argue with someone who will not listen.

DEMETRIUS. Very well, I will go away and leave you to rest.

HERMIA. Thank you.

(HERMIA lies back down and goes to sleep. DEMETRIUS acts like he's leaving, but then finds a spot in another area to lie down as well. HERMIA, DEMETRIUS, AND LYSANDER are asleep. PUCK enters, sees them sleeping, and gets the fairy dust ready.)

PUCK. Let's see, which of these lovesick guys gets the fairy dust? Maybe I should have paid attention earlier. Hmm . . . better safe than sorry. I will give some to both! (PUCK sprinkles fairy dust on LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS while speaking.) You silly humans who mess up your lives, you run and you chase and cover your eyes. My spell will make your fate decree; awaken to new love, with magic cast by me.

(PUCK exits. HELENA enters and looks around.)

HELENA. No wonder I couldn't find anyone. They're all asleep here in the forest. (HERMIA wakes up and sees HELENA.)

HERMIA. Helena!

HELENA. Hermia, what are you doing here?

HERMIA. Lysander and I were running away to marry, and Demetrius came looking for me. He is complicating everything! How I wish he loved you instead of me.

HELENA. (Sighs.) That is my wish as well.

HERMIA. Maybe he will come to his senses and see how good you would be for him.

HELENA. Maybe I will come to my senses and stop loving him.

HERMIA. My dear friend, you deserve to be happy.

HELENA. But I seem to run from happiness and towards heartbreak. If I was like you, and had two men in love with me, I would be the happiest girl ever!

HERMIA. You really think so?

HELENA. It would be a great problem to have.

HERMIA. You wouldn't say so if that were the case.

HELENA. I would like to know what it feels like. But I am also tired, and the air is mild and sweet. I will join you in some sleep, and let my mind and heart have a rest.

(HERMIA and HELENA lay down to sleep in the same area. DEMETRIUS awakes and comes towards HELENA and HERMIA. OBERON and TITANIA enter quietly and wait in the background on separate sides of the stage. DEMETRIUS wakes HELENA and HERMIA is awakened by the noise.)

DEMETRIUS. Helena, my love! How glad I am that you are here. I must tell you that I love you! How blind I have been. Please say that you love me! I was so wrong before! I cannot live without you!

HELENA. Demetrius, how I wished and hoped for this! Yes, of course I love you. But - are you sure?

DEMETRIUS. Of course I am sure. Let us marry immediately. Tonight. Right now.

HERMIA. (Happy for them both.) Yes! You must come with Lysander and me. We are on our way to find the priest. He can marry you both tonight as well! (HELENA and DEMETRIUS look at each other with happiness. LYSANDER has woken up and enters.)

LYSANDER. Helena! My love! How glad I am that you are here. I must tell you that I love you! How blind I have been. Please say that you love me! I was so wrong before! I cannot live without you!

HELENA and HERMIA. What?

HELENA. Am I dreaming?

LYSANDER. (To DEMETRIUS.) You have no right to Helena. You are engaged to Hermia. Her father already gave his blessing.

DEMETRIUS. You are the one who has no right to Helena! You were running away to marry Hermia!

LYSANDER. Not anymore.

HERMIA. (To LYSANDER.) Lysander, are you unwell? Did you eat some bad mushrooms in the woods?

LYSANDER. Hermia, I am very sorry. But my heart is ruling my head. I now love Helena and I do not know why!

HELENA. Two men in love with *me*. I *must* be dreaming!

HERMIA. Then will you please wake up? I'm in this dream with you, and it is all very strange!

HELENA. Strange – but nice! (Both LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS are vying for HELENA's attention. HERMIA is sitting alone. OBERON and TITANIA come together.)

TITANIA. This is not what was supposed to happen. Where is Puck?

OBERON. We should not have interfered. But you wanted to help again!

TITANIA. Maybe you do have a point. I am glad they cannot see us. How embarrassing to have my plan go so wrong! Oberon, please summon Puck immediately.

OBERON. Puck! Get over here right now!

PUCK. (Enters.) I'm here! What's the big emergency? I really would like to get back to my fun.

OBERON. I thought you said you could handle this!

PUCK. I did handle it!

OBERON. Life was supposed to get better for these humans, not worse! They don't need our help to mess things up! Who did you sprinkle the dust on?

PUCK. Titania said to give it to ... (PUCK motions, thinking, trying to remember.)

OBERON. So?

PUCK. I couldn't remember exactly who was supposed to get it.

TITANIA. What did you do, Puck?

PUCK. I let them share. Wasn't that nice of me?

TITANIA. Puck, did you really forget, or were you just causing mischief? There would be less trouble in the forest if you *were* off at a party somewhere!

PUCK. (To OBERON.) She's right you know. I really shouldn't be trusted with . . . anything.

OBERON. You made this mess, and by the laws of the forest, you must undo it. Take the spell off of Lysander immediately and put him back to normal, in love with . . . (to TITANIA) which one is he in love with?

TITANIA. Hermia.

PUCK. This would be confusing for anyone. I really shouldn't be blamed . . . all the other times, yes, but . . .

OBERON. (Interrupting PUCK.) No blame! Just fix it!

PUCK. Fix what?

OBERON. The mess you made!

PUCK. They're fine! They will be fine!

TITANIA. Puck, you are not leaving until you clean up this mess.

PUCK. I heard that a lot from my mother growing up.

TITANIA. Do I need to send your mother a message?

PUCK. That is a lecture I do not want to hear.

OBERON. Good. We're waiting.

(END OF SAMPLE)

“Midsummer Night’s Dream” Production Notes

Specifics -

Acts:	One act
Scenes:	One
Length:	13 pages
Genre:	Fantasy
Cast:	Three females; three males; one either male or female (Puck) option for as many background actors as desired
Audience:	Family friendly
Setting:	Somewhere in an enchanted forest (one set)

Synopsis – Adapted from Shakespeare’s Midsummer Night’s Dream, this simplified version is much shorter, easy to understand, and focuses on one plot. Forest creatures, people in love and a king and queen of the forest make for a fun story of love and mischief. A delight for audiences and actors!

Costumes – Endless options! Simple or elaborate, just about anything goes! Think colorful and maybe even mismatched, especially for the fairies and forest creatures. Your choice!

Set – An enchanted forest. One set.

Props – None needed.

Background actors – There are fairies and mystical forest creatures which can be played by background actors if available.