

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare



A Midsummer Night's Dream

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A father's word was law in Athens. Theseus warned Hermia that if she disobeyed her father, she would be placed in a nunnery or put to death. Hermia announced she would rather become a nun than marry Demetrius, when she loved Lysander. The duke gave her a few days to think about her future.



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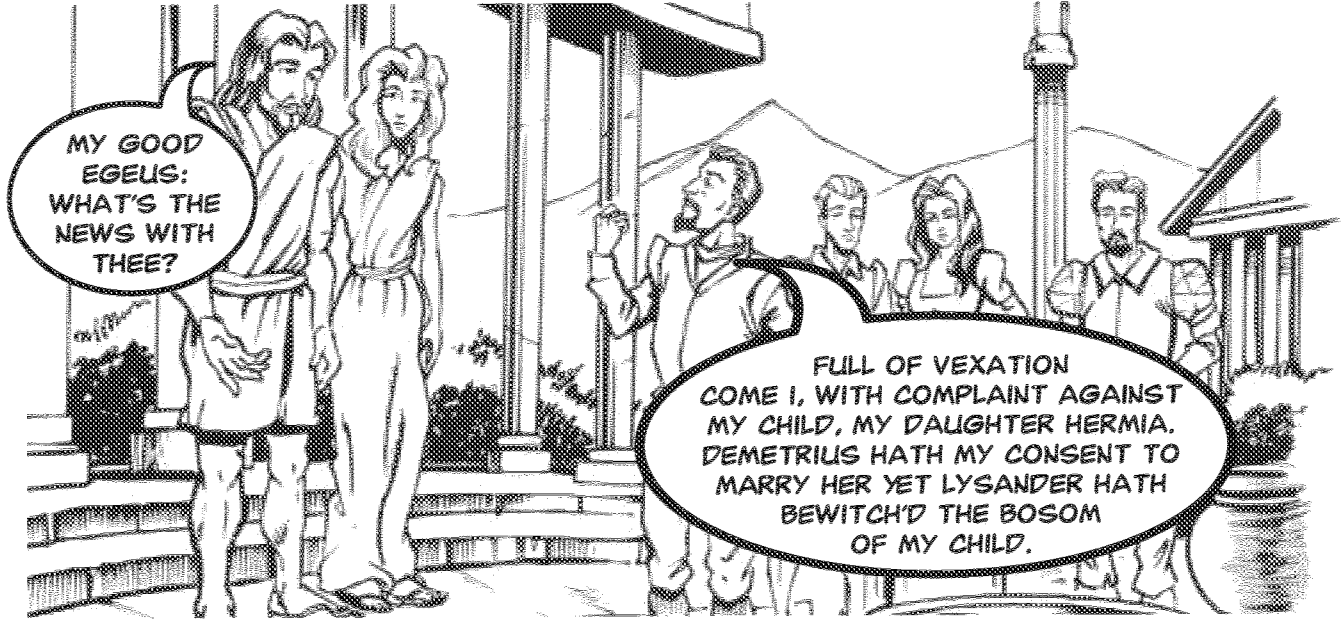
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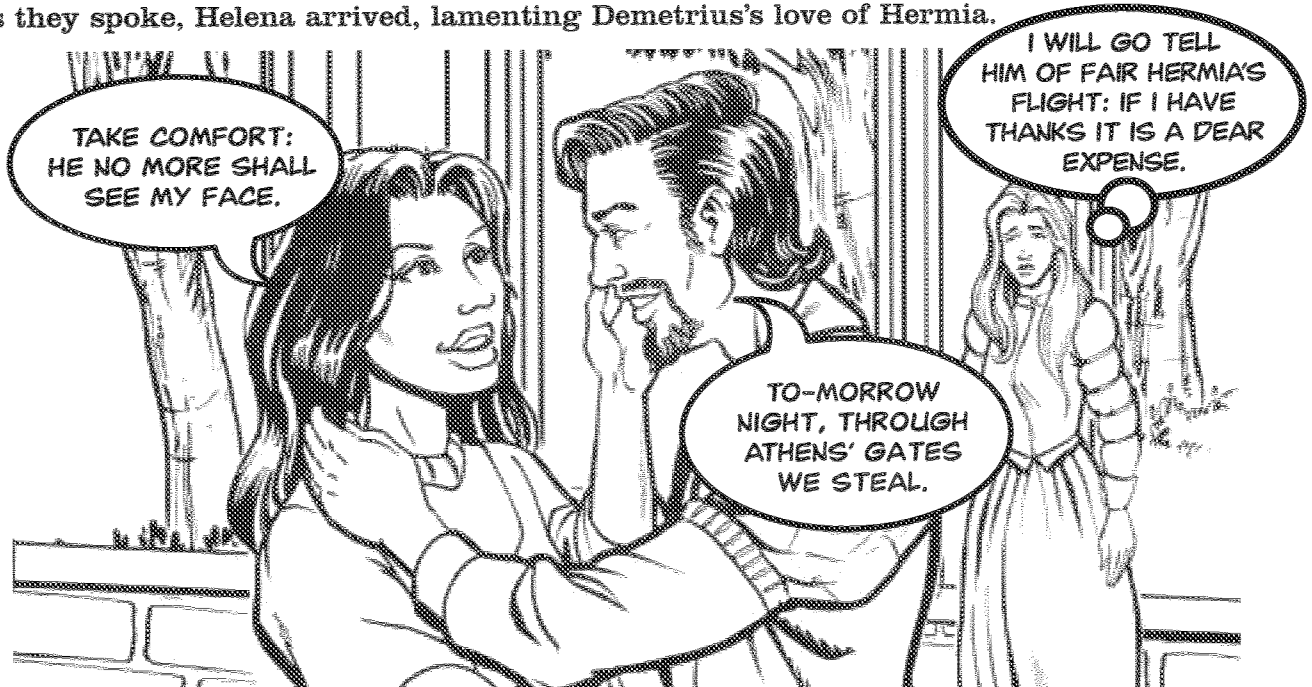
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Theseus, Duke of Athens, was to marry Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, in four days. While they were discussing their wedding, a very upset Egeus interrupted them. With him were his daughter, Hermia, and the two men who loved her, Demetrius and Lysander.



Lysander reminded the duke that Demetrius had previously wooed Helena. The duke took Demetrius and Egeus away to speak with them. Hippolyta followed. Left alone, Hermia and Lysander made plans to meet in the forest the next night and run away. As they spoke, Helena arrived, lamenting Demetrius's love of Hermia.



Meanwhile, a group of Athenian craftsmen had heard that the duke was looking for entertainment for his wedding. They hoped to perform a play one of them had written, called *The Most Lamentable Comedy, and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby*. They met to choose parts.



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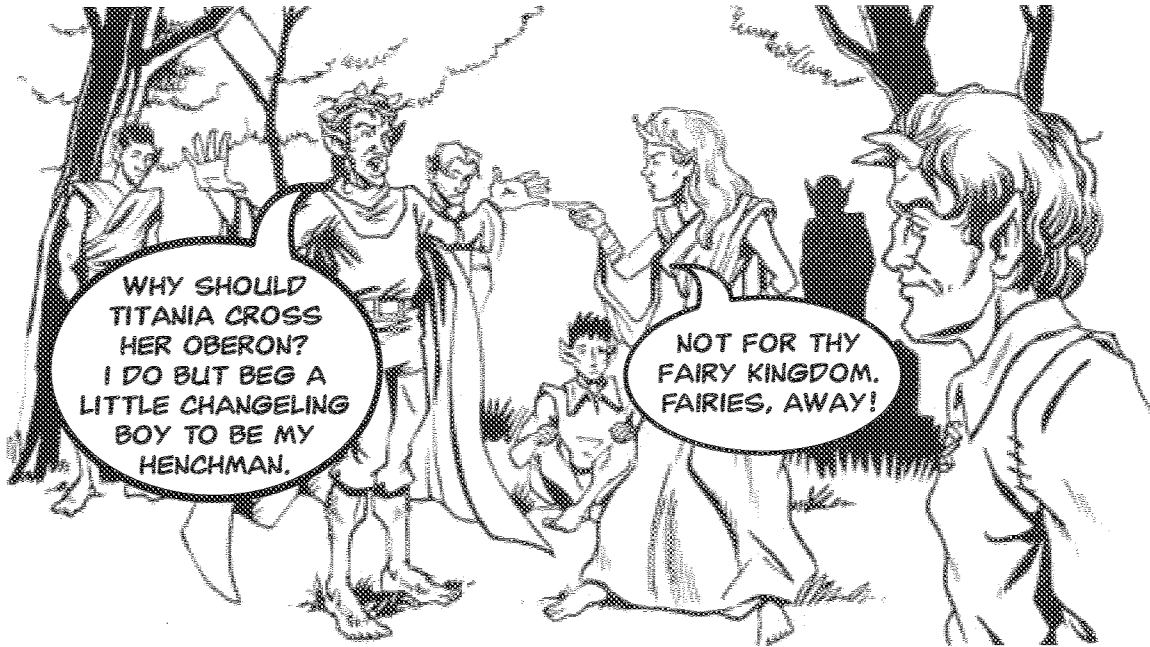
Angry Oberon asked Robin Goodfellow to fetch the purple flower once struck by Cupid's arrow. The flower's juice, when placed on sleeping eyelids, made the victim fall in love with the first creature it sees. He planned to place it on Titania's eyes to embarrass her by making her fall in love with an animal.



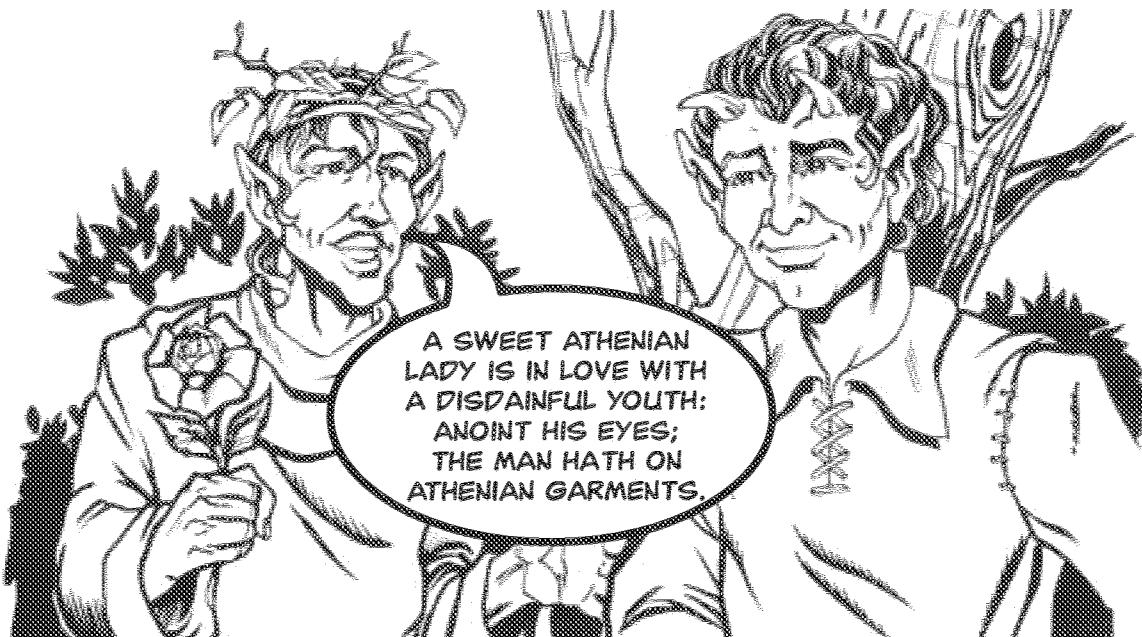
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The woods were more than a place for lovers to meet and craftsmen to rehearse. There, fairies also held their revels. Though that night, there was more arguing than revelry. The king of the fairies was angry because the queen would not give him her page.



As Robin fetched the flower, Oberon spied Helena chasing Demetrius, who was searching for Hermia in the woods. Helena told Demetrius she loved him, but Demetrius declared he could never return her love. When Robin returned with the flower, Oberon anointed Titania's eyes, then asked Robin to cast a spell, too.



Hermia and Lysander were also in the woods, running away as planned. Tired from their travels, they laid down on a grassy bank and fell asleep. Robin came upon the two lovers, saw Lysander's Athenian garments, and mistakenly anointed his eyes with the bewitching juice.



Helena ran off and Lysander chased after her. Then Hermia awoke, crying out for Lysander. She had dreamed a serpent ate her heart, while Lysander watched and smiled. When Lysander did not answer, Hermia became increasingly upset.



Robin left the sleeping couple. Then Helena, lost after Demetrius abandoned her in the dark woods, stumbled upon Lysander, waking him. Lysander instantly fell in love with Helena, saying it was her, not Hermia, whom he loved. Helena thought that he was mocking her.



In another part of the forest, Robin Goodfellow came upon the tradesmen's rehearsal. When the puck realized the fairy queen slept nearby, he slipped an ass's head on the shoulders of Nick Bottom. The other tradesmen ran away in fear. Bottom, unaware of his transformation, thought they were teasing him.



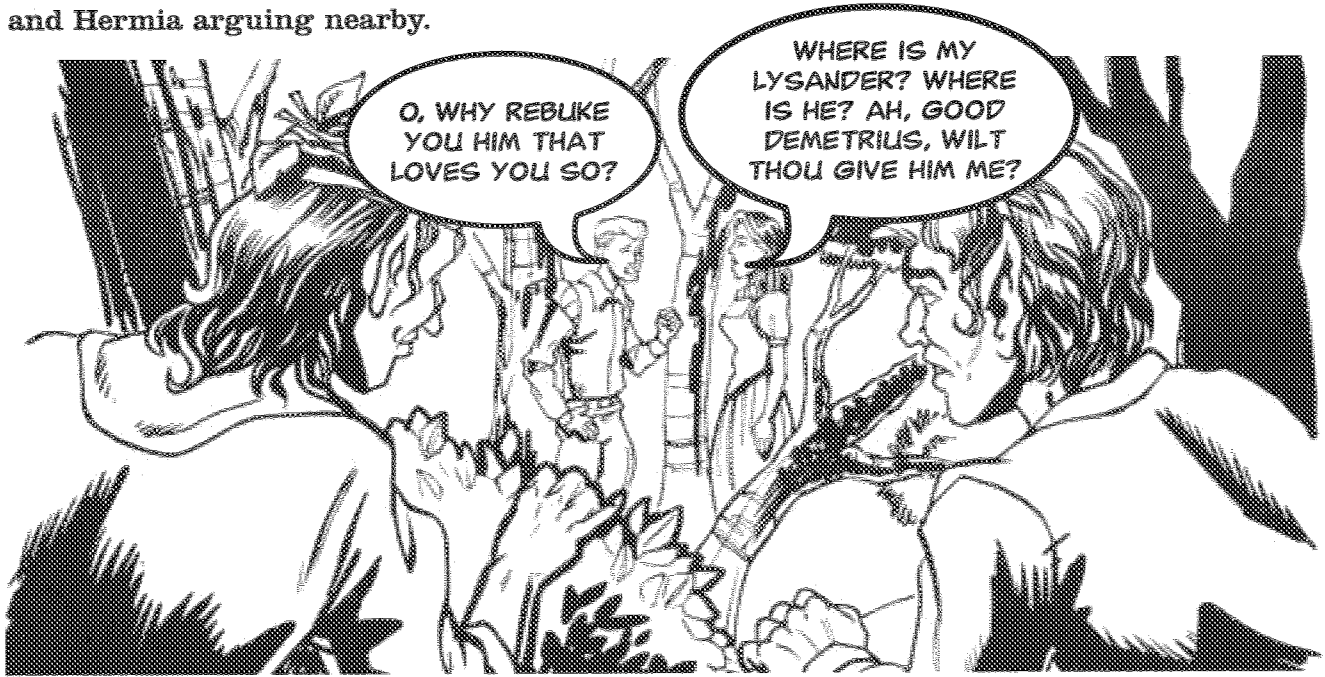
Bottom's singing woke the fairy queen. When she opened her eyes, which Oberon had anointed with the flower's juice, the first thing she saw was Bottom's hairy head. Titania instantly fell in love.



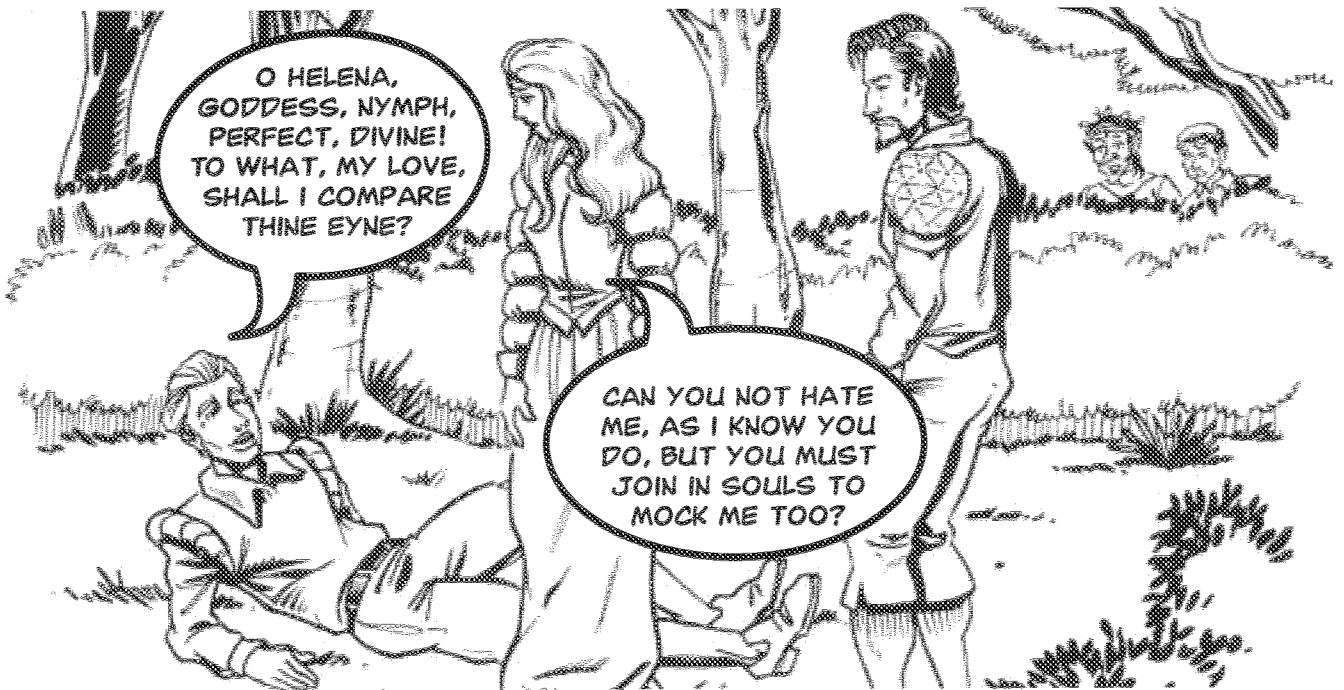
When Oberon saw that Demetrius was still in love with Hermia, he realized Robin's mistake. After Hermia ran off in search of Lysander, and Demetrius laid down to rest, Oberon sent Robin to find and bring back Helena. Then he himself anointed Demetrius's eyes with the purple flower's juice.



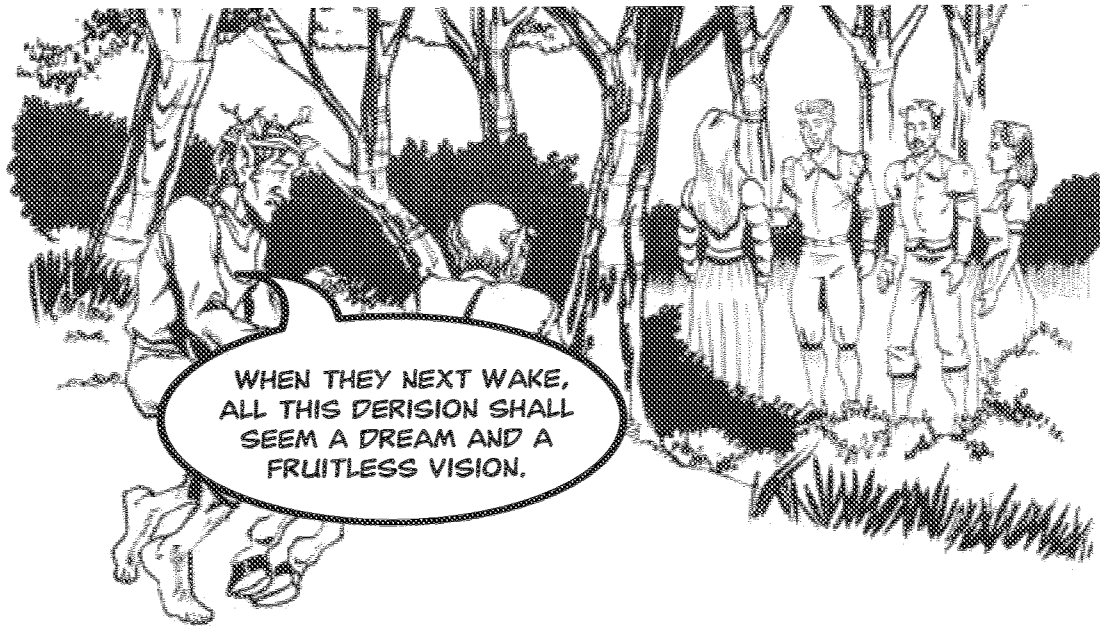
Robin returned to Oberon and reported that Titania had fallen in love with a fool wearing an ass's head. Oberon was delighted with the news. Robin also said that he had anointed the Athenian's eyes. As they spoke, Oberon and Robin spied Demetrius and Hermia arguing nearby.



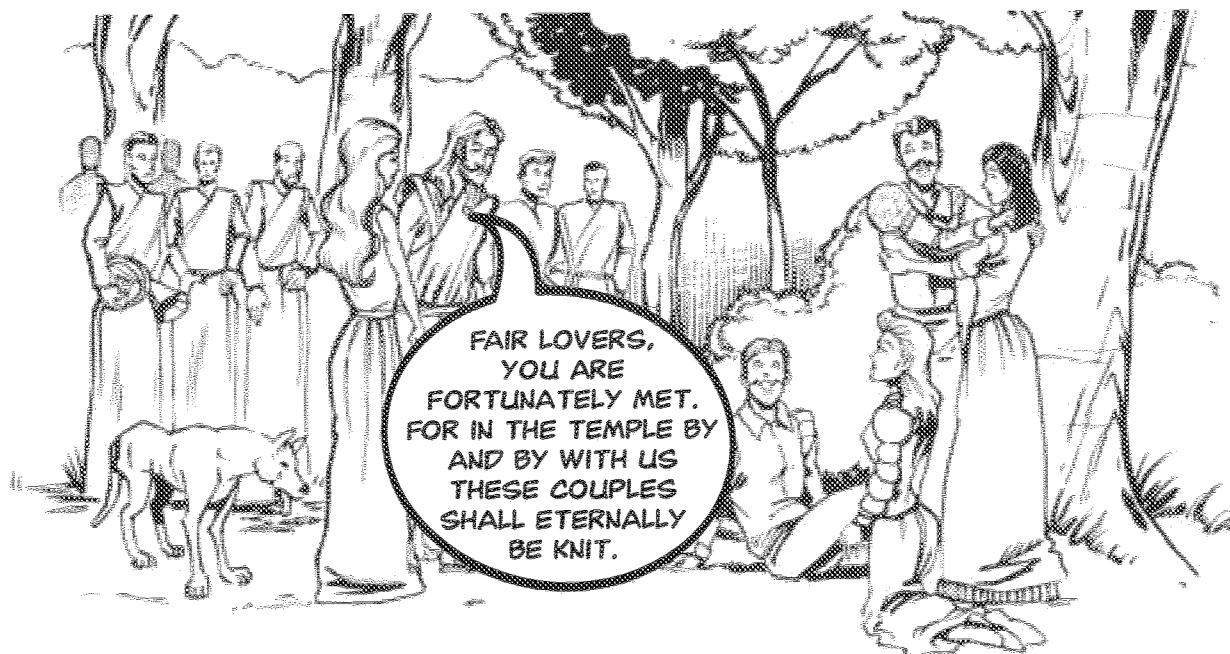
Robin led Helena, who was being pursued by Lysander, back to where Demetrius was sleeping. The sound of their voices woke Demetrius. He opened his eyes, looked at Helena, and fell madly in love with her—much to Helena's surprise and disbelief.



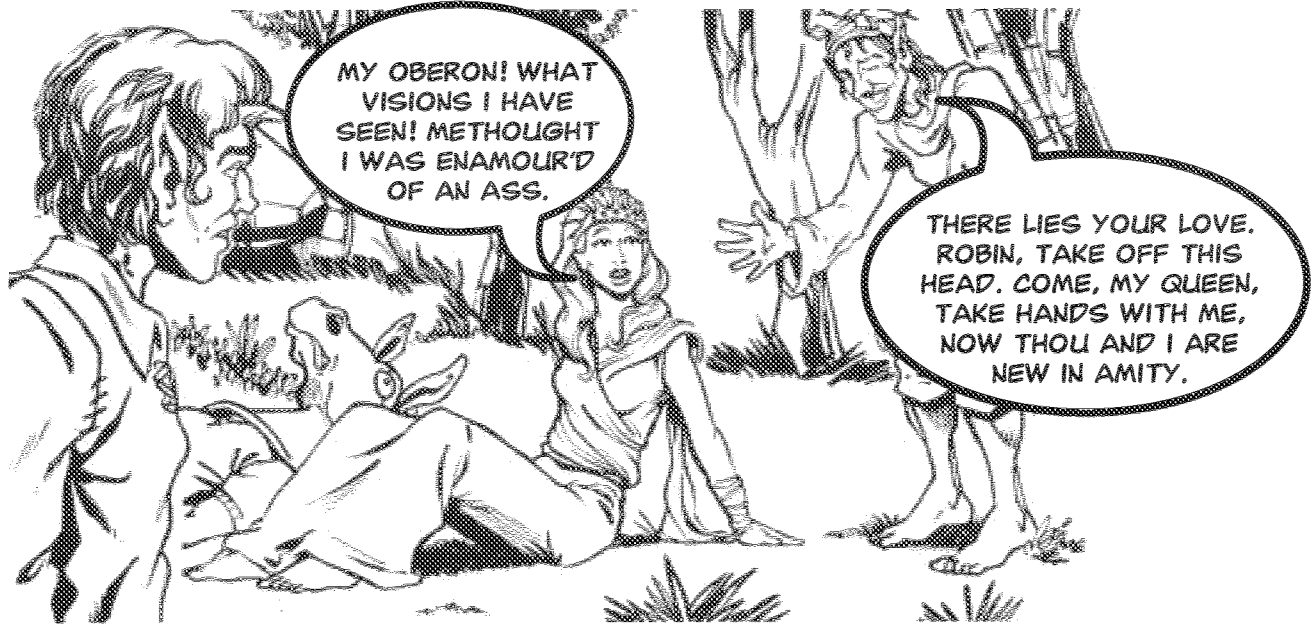
While Demetrius and Lysander declared their love to Helena, Hermia appeared. Her happiness at finding Lysander quickly faded when he told her that he no longer loved her—it was Helena he now loved. Oberon ordered Robin to put the men to sleep and remove the charm on Lysander's eyes.



As the king and queen danced in one part of the forest, the four young lovers slept in another. They were soon wakened when Theseus and Hippolyta came upon them while hunting. Demetrius immediately pledged his love to Helena, and Lysander to Hermia.



While Robin took care of the young lovers, Oberon went to visit Titania. She was so captivated with Bottom that she willingly gave Oberon the page he had wanted. Later, as the queen and Bottom slept in each other's arms, Oberon removed the spell from Titania. Robin looked on as Oberon woke his queen.



The three couples were married that evening. Theseus chose the tradesmen's play for entertainment. Afterwards, the newlyweds retired to their chambers. As everyone fell asleep, Oberon, Titania, and their train of fairies danced through the palace.

