

A Midsummer Night's Dream
Audition Monologues
(choose one)

THESEUS

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
Another moon. But, O, methinks how slow
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires
Like to a stepdame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.
Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments.
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth.
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.

Philostrate exits.

Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword
And won thy love doing thee injuries,
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling.

EGEUS

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.—
Stand forth, Lysander.—And, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.—
With cunning hast thou filched my daughter's heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
To stubborn harshness.—And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your Grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens:
As she is mine, I may dispose of her,
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

PHILOSTRATE

A play there is, my lord, some ten words long
(Which is as brief as I have known a play),
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play,
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is.
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself,
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESEUS

What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE

Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labored in their minds till now,
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

THESEUS

We will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE

So please your Grace, the Prologue is addressed.

HERMIA

Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? Where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never numbered among men.
O, once tell true! Tell true, even for my sake!

LYSANDER

I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possessed. My love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly ranked
(If not with vantage) as Demetrius';
And (which is more than all these boasts can be)
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia.
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.
He will not know what all but he do know.
And, as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste.
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
For, ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and show'rs of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
Then to the wood will he tomorrow night
Pursue her. And, for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll stay; the other stayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood,
And here am I, and wood within this wood
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
Or rather do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you?

You do impeach your modesty too much
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not,
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

QUINCE (PROLOGUE)

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know.

This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.

This man with lime and roughcast doth present

“Wall,” that vile wall which did these lovers sunder;

And through Wall’s chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth “Moonshine,” for, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus’ tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast (which “Lion” hight by name)

The trusty Thisbe coming first by night

Did scare away or rather did affright;

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

And finds his trusty Thisbe’s mantle slain.

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,

He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast.

And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

At large discourse, while here they do remain.

BOTTOM, *as Pyramus*

Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams.

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright,

For by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,

I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.—

But stay! O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see!

How can it be!

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good—

What, stained with blood?

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum,

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

O, wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame,

Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear,

Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame

That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer?

Come, tears, confound!

Out, sword, and wound

The pap of Pyramus;

Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop. *Pyramus stabs himself.*

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

Now am I dead;

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky.

Tongue, lose thy light!

Moon, take thy flight!

Now die, die, die, die, die.

Pyramus falls.

FLUTE, *as Thisbe*

Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead? Dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks
Are gone, are gone!
Lovers, make moan;
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters Three,
Come, come to me
With hands as pale as milk.
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word!
Come, trusty sword,
Come, blade, my breast imbrue!

Thisbe stabs herself.

And farewell, friends.
Thus Thisbe ends.
Adieu, adieu, adieu.

Thisbe falls.

SNUG, *as Lion*

You ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, as Snug the joiner, am
A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam;
For if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

SNOOT, *as Wall*

In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall as I would have you think
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
Did whisper often, very secretly.
This loam, this roughcast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall. The truth is so.
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

OBERON

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb'rest
Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song.
That very time I saw (but thou couldst not),
Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow.
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before, milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck exits.

Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she, waking, looks upon
(Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape)
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from off her sight
(As I can take it with another herb),
I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible,
And I will overhear their conference.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence.
Never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: the spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world
By their increase now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order,
And in the spicèd Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.
Fairies, away.
We shall chide downright if I longer stay.

ROBIN (PUCK)

Thou speakest aright.
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal.
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob
And on her withered dewlap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she
And "Tailor!" cries and falls into a cough,
And then the whole choir hold their hips and loffe
And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.
But room, fairy. Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire;
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere.
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits. I'll be gone.
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

She exits.