

A Midsummer Night's Dream abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 1

Joy

Situation: The three couples have just married. Bottom has returned to his friends. He reports that their play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, has been chosen as the preferred play for the reception. The happiest, giddiest moment in all of Shakespeare's plays occurs at the reception.

HIPPOLYTA: 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

THESEUS: More strange than true.

Theseus to Hippolyta

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains
Where an antique fable of fairies reigns.
The lunatic, lover and poet do
Shape more images than cool reason can
Comprehend. One sees devils in a stew,
Where lovers see the beauty of Helen
In a brow of Egypt. The poet's eye
Glances from heaven to earth and doth lie
Frenzied, forming bodies of things unknown,
With his pen turning odd shapes from airy
Nothing. The mind is tricked by these thoughts sown,
That if to apprehend some joy must be
A strange bringer of that joy. It can scare
A soul as if a bush supposed a bear.

HIPPOLYTA: All their minds transfigured so together. But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia and Helena enter.

THESEUS: Here come the lovers full of joy and mirth. Joy, gentle friends! What masques, what dances shall we have. Where is our usual manager of mirth? What revels are in hand? Call Philostrate.

PHILOSTRATE: Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS: Say, what abridgment have you for this evening, what masque, what music?

PHILOSTRATE: Make choice of which your Highness will see first.

Theseus reviews the list of options offered by Philostrate.

THESEUS: "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love, Thisbe, very tragical mirth." How shall we find the concord of this discord?

PHILOSTRATE: A play there is, my lord, some ten words long. But by ten words, my lord, it is too long.

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.

THESEUS: And we will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE: No, my noble lord, it is not for you.

THESEUS: I will hear the play. Go, bring them in. And take your places, ladies.