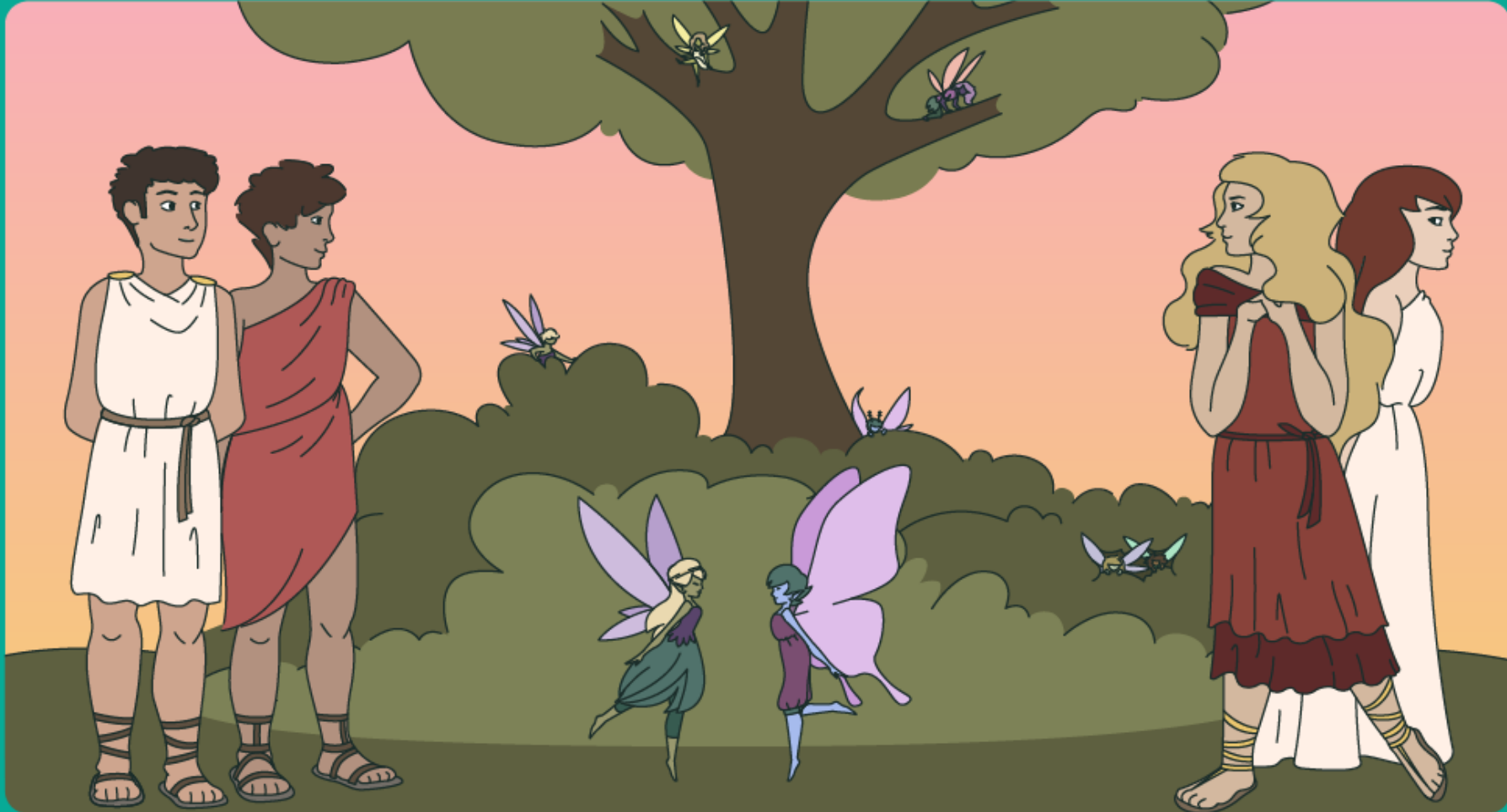


A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare



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LbQ Classics Series

Long ago in Athens, an argument raged between Hermia and her father, Egeus.

“You must marry Demetrius! He’s kind, and he loves you,” Egeus ordered.

“I refuse. I love Lysander!” Hermia retorted furiously.

Egeus demanded that Hermia obey him. She stormed out, planning to run away with Lysander and get married secretly. Hermia told the plan to her friend Helena, but Helena was in love with Demetrius, and told him about the plot. That night, Demetrius stealthily followed Hermia and Lysander into the forest. Jealous Helena trailed behind them.



In the same forest, a band of angry fairies gathered in the moonlight. Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, and her husband, Oberon, were having a huge argument. Titania flew off in a terrible temper. Oberon wanted revenge, and he sent his servant, Puck, to find a magical flower. Oberon planned to rub the flower on Titania's eyelids as she slept, and then she would fall madly in love with the first living thing that she saw when she awoke. Oberon intended for Titania to fall in love with something utterly ridiculous, so she'd be embarrassed and regret upsetting him.



Elsewhere in the forest, another group gathered that was less fairy-like! Some loud and clumsy workmen were meeting to rehearse a tragic play called 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. The workmen argued about their roles.

"I can't be Thisbe," complained Francis Flute. "I'm growing a beard!"

"My fierce roaring might frighten the ladies," worried Snug, who was going to be the lion.

Nick Bottom, the weaver, was very confident about his acting. He thought that he had a lovely woman's voice (and also a great roar), but he was persuaded to play the role of handsome Pyramus.



Meanwhile, back in the fairy glade, Oberon made himself invisible and watched as Demetrius and Helena passed by looking for Hermia and Lysander. “Oh, stop following me Helena! I don’t love you. The sight of you makes me sick!” Demetrius shouted. “I know that, Demetrius, but I still adore you! I feel sick when I *can’t* look at you!” she replied. Oberon wanted to help poor Helena. When Puck returned with the magical flower, Oberon asked him to find cruel Demetrius, rub the flower on his eyes as he slept and then make sure that Helena was there when he woke.



Hermia and Lysander, exhausted from their escape from Athens, eventually fell asleep in separate parts of a quiet glade. When Puck saw them, he assumed that the young man was the one he was looking for, so he rubbed the flower on Lysander's eyes. Later that night, Helena, alone and afraid, stumbled into the glade looking for Demetrius. She saw Lysander lying on the ground, and she was scared that he was hurt.



“Lysander, are you dead or asleep? If you are alive, please wake up!” she begged.

As soon as he laid eyes on her, Lysander forgot all about Hermia and fell deeply in love with Helena.

Nearby, the workmen were rehearsing. Mischief maker, Puck, turned Nick Bottom's head into a donkey head. When Bottom tried to speak to his friends, they were terrified. Titania awoke at all the noise. She immediately saw Bottom and fell hopelessly in love with him!

“My beautiful love!” Titania exclaimed. “Let me stroke your soft ears.”

Oberon and Puck were delighted at this hilarious sight, but then Puck realised that he had mistaken Lysander for Demetrius. He found Demetrius



sleeping quietly and rubbed the flower on his eyes. When Demetrius awoke, he also fell madly in love with Helena!

Demetrius declared, “Helena, you are a goddess. Let me kiss your hand!”

“Oh, lovely Helena! I adore you!” said Lysander. Helena thought that they were both being cruel and she grew angry.

Then Hermia arrived. She heard Lysander declare his love for Helena and was devastated. Hermia accused Helena of stealing her beloved, and the two women had a bitter argument. Lysander and Demetrius both tried to protect Helena, but they began to fight. Eventually, Puck led them all away to sleep in the glade, then he rubbed the flower on Lysander’s eyes and placed him so he would see Hermia when he awoke.



In the morning, the fairies watched as the four young Athenians woke up. They saw that peace and love was restored: Lysander now loved Hermia and Demetrius loved Helena. Oberon decided that Titania had been punished enough, so he reversed the spell and Titania realised her love was foolish. Titania quickly forgave Oberon and they danced off together into the forest. Puck restored Nick Bottom's human head and Bottom ran off to perform 'Pyramus and Thisbe' for the young couples. The play was a huge success because the actors muddled their lines terribly, and the tragic play became a comedy!



Task

- Do you think that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.