

So . . . what's up in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM??!! [1. THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH!]

Once upon a time in Athens . . . in the court, in the forest, in fairyland . . . there is A LOT going on:

--happiness

--unhappiness

--love

--anger

--confusion

--a pissed off parent

--fear

. . . like real life, right? Oh and also

--revenge

--mischief

--magic

Theseus, the Duke of Athens, has wooed Hippolyta, the warrior queen of the Amazons, and they are to be married. Theseus says [2. I WOOED THEE WITH MY SWORD . . . BUT NOW I WILL WED THEE . . . WITH POMP, WITH TRIUMPH, AND WITH REVELING!] Love. Awwwww.

In the fairy kingdom though, Titania and Oberon, king and queen of the fairies, are arguing over a darling orphaned Indian boy. Each wants to raise him. They disagree fiercely. He says [3. ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT, PROUD TITANIA!] She says [4. WHAT, JEALOUS OBERON?] and [5. I WILL NOT PART WITH HIM!] Oberon's not happy.

And Hermia's father, Egeus, is not the least bit happy. [6. FULL OF VEXATION COME I, WITH COMPLAINT AGAINST MY CHILD, MY DAUGHTER HERMIA!] Hermia is in love with the wrong guy. She loves Lysander. Her father wants to give her to Demetrius. In Athens, fathers rule. And the rule is tough. Egeus says, [7. I MAY DISPOSE OF HER TO [DEMETRIUS] . . . OR TO HER DEATH!] Hermia has FOUR DAYS to come around, or she dies.

So . . .

--Lysander loves Hermia.

--Hermia loves Lysander.

--Hermia's BFF Helena loves Demetrius

--But . . . Demetrius loves Hermia.

--And NOBODY loves Helena.

Helena says to Hermia, [8. DEMETRIUS LOVES YOU FAIR! O HAPPY FAIR!] and [9. THE MORE I LOVE, THE MORE HE HATETH ME!] And so that goes on for a while.

Meanwhile . . . some workmen have decided they will put on a play for the Duke and Hippolyta at their wedding. And they begin to practice. They have the whole discussion about who plays whom [10. WHAT IS PYRAMUS—A LOVER OR A TYRANT?] and they schedule their next rehearsal [11. WE WILL MEET AND THERE WE WILL REHEARSE MOST OBSCENELY AND COURAGEOUSLY!]

There's a lot going on in the play, and we're just getting started!

We meet Puck [12. I AM THAT MERRY WANDERER OF THE NIGHT!] who is Oberon's kind of avatar. When the lovers escape to the forest to straighten things out, and he starts the fairy magic working. But mistakes are made. Things get all mixed up. Some of the most great lines in Shakespeare! [13. I LOVE THEE NOT! THEREFORE PURSUE ME NOT!] and [14. I AM YOUR SPANIEL!] and [15. VILE THING, LET LOOSE!] and [16. GODDESS, NYMPH, PERFECT, DIVINE!] and [17. YOU JUGGLER! YOU CANKERBLOSSOM! YOU THIEF OF LOVE!] and [18. I AM UGLY AS A BEAR!] Poor Helena!

Puck also works Oberon's revenge on Titania: he turns one of the workmen-players into a kind of ass (a donkey kind of ass) and causes the Fairy Queen to fall in love with him. [19. I WILL WIND THEE IN MY ARMS] she says.

And through all of this . . . those workmen keep rehearsing that play! They worry about all kinds of things. The audience [20. WILL NOT THE LADIES BE AFRAID OF THE LION?] and the set [21. YOU CAN NEVER BRING IN A WALL!]

All the confusion comes right in the end.

—Titania and Oberon make up. Titania says [22. METHOUGHT I WAS ENAMORED OF AN ASS!]

—The lovers are happily arranged. Demetrius says [23. MY LOVE, MY LIFE, MY SOUL, FAIR HELENA!] Hermia's father can relax.

—Theseus and Hippolyta are wed, and it's time for the play! In which there is a fabulous and lengthy death line [24. THUS I DIE, THUS, THUS, THUS. NOW AM I DEAD.] Extending into [25. NOW AM I FLED . . . NOW DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE, DIE!]

And all those happy couples obey Theseus' last command [26. SWEET FRIENDS, TO BED!]

Those couples loved the play, and we have all loved putting on this play—a very special, once-in-a-lifetime *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM!*

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