

Soliloquies – A sampling from Midsummer

1. Helena – She speaks this after Hermia and Lysander have left, and she is feeling sorry for herself; Demetrius has dropped her to chase after her best friend Hermia, and she is jealous, hurt. Then she comes up with a plan. (Note: this piece has been edited for length.)

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;
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind:
For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyes,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers 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.

Exit

2. Oberon – The King of the Fairies sends Puck to get the magic flower (“this juice”), and muses on how he will use it to get the “changeling boy” from Titania, the Fairy Queen. Then Demetrius and Helena enter and he observes them, unseen.

OBERON

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.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA, following him

3. Puck – Puck has been sent by Oberon to find a young man in Athenian garments and to “juice” him with the love flower. He finds a sleeping Lysander, instead of Demetrius, and gives him a good dose on his eyelids.

PUCK

Through the forest have I gone.
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower’s force in stirring love.
Night and silence.--Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wakest, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon.

Exit

4. Hermia – This is the shortest soliloquy of the bunch – which makes it comic! Hermia has just been through a whirl of confusion in the woods, and is too exhausted to give a huge speech...

HERMIA

I am amazed, and know not what to say.

Exit

5. Nick Bottom – Nick awakens, restored to his natural self after his midsummer night’s adventure of having his head transformed by Puck into a donkey’s head. His time with the Fairy Queen, who fell in love with him while under the spell of the “love juice,” all seems a dream now...

BOTTOM

[Awaking] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was--there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,--and methought I had,--but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

Exit