

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S TEXAS-SIZE NIGHTMARE

By Burton Bumgarner

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TOLL FREE (888) 473-8521 • FAX (319) 368-8011

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S TEXAS-SIZE NIGHTMARE**By Burton Bumgarner**

SYNOPSIS: The Armadillo Flats Community Theater has never produced what one would call quality entertainment. Abigail Yokle is trying to direct one of Shakespeare's great comic masterpieces, but the budget is limited and the rental company sent costumes for every production except *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Yet Abigail is not about to let the wrong costumes and a lack of talent stand in the way of a bad production. The actors appear as characters from the 1920s, the 1950s, a cat, a lumberjack, a disco dancer, a sailor and a host of characters from other shows. Locals also use the theater to advertise businesses and make political speeches. Other distractions include an audience member who forgets to silence a cell phone and a snake that crawls into the theater through a hole in the wall.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

FLEXIBLE CAST OF 28: APPROXIMATELY TEN MALE, TWELVE FEMALE, SEVEN EITHER, EXTRAS, DOUBLING POSSIBLE

THE PRODUCERS

Abigail Yokle (f) Director (42 lines)
Stage Manager (m or f) Stage Manager (30 lines)

THE ROYALS

Theseus (m) 1920s; Duke of Athens (45 lines)
Hippolyta (f) 1920s flapper; Queen of the Amazons, about to marry Theseus (12 lines)
Philostrate (m) Elmer, an oil field worker; a servant of Theseus (11 lines)
Egeus (m) Wilbur, an oil field worker father of Hermia (12 lines)
Huntsman (m or f) Non-speaking role works for Theseus

THE LOVERS

Hermia (f)	Dressed in 1950's poodle skirt; in love with Lysander (32 lines)
Lysander (m).....	From the alps and wearing lederhosen in love with Hermia (44 lines)
Demetrius (m).....	Sailor; in love with Hermia (22 lines)
Helena (f).....	Cat; in love with Demetrius (34 lines)

THE RUDE MECHANICALS

Peter Quince (m)	Lumberjack; a carpenter (47 lines)
Nick Bottom (m)	Mechanic; a weaver (36 lines)
Flute (f).....	Aerobics instructor; a bellows mender (14 lines)
Snug (m or f)	Hawaiian; a joiner (15 lines)
Snout (f)	Hippie; a tinker (12 lines)
Robin Starvling (m).....	Disco king; a tailor (12 lines)

THE FAIRIES

Puck (m)	Ranch hand; a mischief maker, serves Oberon (28 lines)
Oberon (m).....	Elvis; king of the fairies (34 lines)
Titania (f).....	A cowgirl; queen of the fairies (22 lines)
Cowgirls (3 or more – f).....	Attend Titiana (10 lines)

THE LOCALS

Harold (m or f).....	owns a diner (7 lines)
Suzie Lynn (f)	a dance instructor (1 line)
Cell Phoner (m or f).....	planted in the audience (1 line)
Ruby (f)	owns a used tire store (1 line)

Snake Handler (m or f).....Planted in the audience
(1 line)

Ricky Joe Slick (m or f).....Owner of Slick Oil Company
(1 line)

***NOTE:** The play is written for a cast of 28. Many of the roles are flexible, and the roles of the locals can be doubled. Extras may be used as cowgirls or royals. Costuming can be simple.*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

- Scene 1** Abigail, Stage Manager (Curtain Speech)
- Scene 2** The Royals, the Lovers, Harold
- Scene 3** The Rude Mechanicals
- Scene 4** Abigail, the Fairies, Suzie Lynn
- Scene 5** Cell Phoner, Titania, Bottom, Abigail
- Scene 6** The Fairies and the Lovers
- Scene 7** Ruby, the Rude Mechanicals, the Fairies, the Lovers

ACT TWO

- Scene 1** Abigail, Snake Handler, Harold (Curtain Speech)
- Scene 2** The Fairies, the Lovers, the Royals
- Scene 3** The Rude Mechanicals, Ricky Joe
- Scene 4** The Whole Dang Cast

PRODUCTION NOTES

A Midsummer-Night's Texas-Size Nightmare is set at a community theater in the West Texas town of Armadillo Flats. The theater has never produced what one would call quality entertainment. Abigail Yokle is trying to direct a production of Shakespeare's great comic masterpiece. The budget is limited and the rental company sent costumes for every production EXCEPT *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Abigail, who's easily distracted, is not about to let the wrong costumes and a lack of talent stand in the way of a bad production. The actors appear as characters from the 1920s, the 1950s, a cat, a lumberjack, a disco dancer, a sailor and host of characters from other shows. The cast doesn't understand the show, and really doesn't want to be there.

Locals also use the theater to advertise businesses and make political speeches. Other distractions include an audience member who forgets to silence a cell phone and a snake that crawls into the theater through a hole in the wall.

The stage at the Armadillo Flats Community Theater is also used by Ricky Joe Slick, President of Slick Oil Company, for storing oil field supplies. Upstage are moving boxes and crates with Slick Oil Company logos. Some pipe, PVC, and other supplies and junk are being stored on the stage. Also, an old sofa or love seat from a previous production and some folding or stacked chairs are upstage.

The play is written for a cast of twenty-eight (28). Many of the roles are flexible, and the roles of the LOCALS can be doubled. Extras may be used as cowgirls or royals. Costuming can be simple.

The Cotton Eyed Joe line dance suggested in Act One, Scene 4, is a simple folk dance consisting of a combination of easy dance steps. There are numerous websites and videos online that could help with choreography; however, dancing does not need to be precise. Directors may choose to use a different square dance step. If actors do not wish to sing, a call/response can be used, in which case the lines are chanted by a leader and repeated by the Cowgirls (à la Marine drill). Dancers should try, even if they don't get it exactly right.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

CURTAIN SPEECH

SETTING: *A community theater in the West Texas town of Armadillo Flats. Currently, the stage is being used for storing oil field supplies. Upstage are large moving boxes with Slick Oil Company logos. Some pipes, PVC, and other junk, are being stored on the stage. Also, there is an old sofa or love seat and some folding or stacked chairs upstage.*

AT RISE: *MISS ABIGAIL YOKLE enters and crosses center. She is dressed in out-of-style clothes, and carries a stack of notecards from which she will read the curtain speech. She puts on reading glasses, clears her throat and looks at the first card.*

ABIGAIL: *(Reads card.)* Milk. Butter. Lettuce. Lucky Charms. *(Pauses, then puts the card in her pocket.)* Oh. That's my shopping list. *(Looks at another card.)* Here it is. *(Reads card.)* Ladies and gentlemen . . . and others. Welcome to the Armadillo Flats Community Theater production of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. I am Abigail Yokle, the director. As you may know, last year our theater was condemned by the Department of Health and Safety . . . which, I might add, has never condemned another building in history, including Harold's Tex-Mex Cafe, which is crawling with fire ants and roaches. Ricky Joe Slick decided to use our stage to store some of his oil drilling supplies. After we cleaned up our theater, we got it back, and I asked Ricky Joe to move his drilling supplies. *(Looks back.)* I see that he hasn't gotten around to that little chore yet. *(Looking around.)* And we still have some of the furniture from last year's production on stage . . . even though I asked that it be removed. Our sponsors for this show are the Slick Oil Company, Ruby's Used Tire Store, Suzie Lynn's School of Dance, and Harold's Tex-Mex Cafe. This year our budget was cut . . . again. By the time we finished paying for last year's production, and for the cast party, we had exactly \$30, which isn't enough money to buy scripts and pay royalties. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is over four hundred years-old, and is found in our high school textbooks, so we

borrowed the books from the school and spent the \$30 on costume rentals. What can I say? You get what you pay for. Now, as you know, Shakespeare can be challenging. Keep that in mind when our actors mess up their lines. (*Stage Manager enters and crosses to Abigail. He clears his throat and points to his watch.*) Yes?

STAGE MANAGER: We need to start the play.

ABIGAIL: Shouldn't we warn the audience about the costumes?

STAGE MANAGER: (*To AUDIENCE.*) We ordered the costumes from Ed's Discount Costume Rental. Ed sent costumes for every show except the show we are doing.

ABIGAIL: What about the fire marshal?

STAGE MANAGER: (*To AUDIENCE.*) In the event you need to get out, then get out.

ABIGAIL: Flash photography and videos?

STAGE MANAGER: You saw the dress rehearsal. Who would want to record this?

ABIGAIL: Turning off cell phones and pagers?

STAGE MANAGER: (*To AUDIENCE.*) Leave 'em on. They'll be more interesting than the play.

ABIGAIL: What about the actors? They don't know their lines.

STAGE MANAGER: Maybe they can get the point across (*ABIGAIL looks hopeful.*) . . . but probably not. (*ABIGAIL frowns.*) Let's get it over with.

ABIGAIL: (*To AUDIENCE.*) The play opens at the palace of the Duke of Athens. He's about to marry Hippolyta. Some people show up and want the Duke to resolve a conflict involving true love. . .

STAGE MANAGER: You don't need to tell the story. The actors will.

ABIGAIL: I wouldn't count on that!

STAGE MANAGER: Come on. (*STAGE MANAGER escorts ABIGAIL off stage. They exit.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 2
THE ROYALS, THE LOVERS, HAROLD

THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE enter. THESEUS wears a straw hat, white shirt, bow tie, suspenders. HIPPOLYTA is dressed as a flapper from the 1920s. She chews gum. PHILOSTRATE (ELMER) is an oil field rough-neck who just got off work. He wears a dirty white t-shirt, hard hat, work gloves and boots.

THESEUS: Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws apace. Four happy days bring in another moon.

HIPPOLYTA: *(Jersey accent.)* Yeah. Ain't that something.

THESEUS: You got some lines.

HIPPOLYTA: Oh yeah. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night; four nights will quickly dream away the time... and... uh...

THESEUS: Never mind. *(To PHILOSTRATE.)* Go, Philostrate! Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments. *(Stares at PHILOSTRATE.)* Where's your costume?

PHILOSTRATE: Me and Wilbur just got off work and we didn't have time to clean up.

HIPPOLYTA: *(Fanning the air with her hand.)* You smell like petroleum.

PHILOSTRATE: Well, I wonder why. Could it have anything to do with the fact that I work on an oil rig?

THESEUS: Just go stir up the Athenian youth. *(HAROLD enters. He wears a cook's apron and carries a spatula. STAGE MANAGER follows, trying to get HAROLD off stage.)*

STAGE MANAGER: Wait! Harold! You can't go out there!

HAROLD: *(To THESEUS.)* I can't believe what she said about my diner! I want an apology and a re-traction! *(He's trying to say retraction.)*

STAGE MANAGER: You know she's got about as much tact as a bulldozer.

HAROLD: She said Harold's Tex-Mex Cafe has fire ants and roaches!

STAGE MANAGER: She didn't mean it!

HAROLD: First of all, they aren't fire ants!

STAGE MANAGER: Of course not!

HAROLD: They're regular ants! And who around here doesn't have roaches in their kitchen?

HIPPOLYTA: I don't.

PHILOSTRATE: Me either.

THESEUS: I don't, either.

HAROLD: (*Surprised.*) You don't? (*ALL shake their heads.*)

STAGE MANAGER: Come on, Harold. I think something's burning over at the diner.

HAROLD: Again? (*STAGE MANAGER leads HAROLD off stage.*)

THESEUS: (*To PHILOSTRATE.*) How about stirring up those Athenian youth?

PHILOSTRATE: Okay. (*Exits.*)

THESEUS: Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, but I will wed thee in another key, with pomp, with triumph, and with . . . other stuff. (*EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS enter.*)

EGEUS: Me and Elmer just got off work. We didn't have time to clean up.

HIPPOLYTA: We know already!

THESEUS: It's okay, Wilbur. Just say your lines.

EGEUS: What lines?

THESEUS: The lines from the play! The lines you were supposed to memorize!

EGEUS: Oh. Okay. Full of vexation come I, with complaint against my child, my daughter Hermia. Stand forth, Demetrius. (*DEMETRIUS steps forward and salutes.*) My noble lord, this man hath my consent to marry her. Stand forth, Lysander. (*LYSANDER steps forward and sings.*)

LYSANDER: (*Sung to "Home on the Range".*) Oh, give me a yard,
And a big St. Bernard,
And a mountain top covered in snow ...

EGEUS: (*Interrupts.*) That's enough. You made me forget my speech.

HIPPOLYTA: Can you give us the Reader's Digest version?

EGEUS: Okay. This is my daughter Hermia. She's in love with Lysander, only she's supposed to marry Demetrius. According to the law of Athens if she don't do what I tell her, I can have her put to death.

LYSANDER: Wow! That's a tough law!

THESEUS: What say you, Hermia? Demetrius is a worthy gentleman. (*DEMETRIUS smiles and salutes.*)

HERMIA: So is Lysander.

LYSANDER: (*Sings.*) Oh, give me a yard,
And a big St. Bernard . . . (*THESEUS stops him.*)

THESEUS: Don't do that again!

LYSANDER: (*Meekly.*) Sorry.

HERMIA: I do entreat your Grace to pardon me. I know not by what power I am made bold, nor how it may concern my modesty in such a presence here to plead my thoughts; but I beseech your Grace . . . what's the worst that can happen if I refuse to marry Demetrius?

THESEUS: You can marry Demetrius, (*DEMETRIUS smiles and salutes.*) or live in a convent as a sister all your life, chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.

HERMIA: So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord. My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

DEMETRIUS: So, is that a yes or a no?

HERMIA: A no.

LYSANDER: (*To DEMETRIUS.*) You have her father's love, Demetrius. Let me have Hermia's.

EGEUS: I do like Demetrius better than Lysander.

LYSANDER: I am, my lord, as well derived as he. I am beloved of Hermia . . . uh . . . (*Trying to remember lines.*) and Demetrius already has a girlfriend named Helena.

THESEUS: I must confess that I have heard much. But fair Hermia, you must obey your father, or else the law of Athens yields you up. (*Offers his arm to HIPPOLYTA.*) Come, Hippolyta.

HIPPOLYTA: Where're we going?

THESEUS: We're supposed to exit. (*HIPPOLYTA and THESEUS exit. THESEUS returns. To EGEUS and DEMETRIUS.*) You guys are supposed to exit too.

EGEUS/DEMETRIUS: Okay. (*They exit, leaving HERMIA and LYSANDER.*)

LYSANDER: How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?

HERMIA: I guess I'm kind of nervous. You know, after that dress rehearsal. What a mess.

LYSANDER: You're supposed to say, "Belike for want of rain . . ."

HERMIA: Oh. Okay. Belike for want of rain . . . something . . . uh . . . yeah.

LYSANDER: For aught that I could ever read, the course of true love never did run smooth.

HERMIA: Yeah. I know what you mean.

LYSANDER: If there were a sympathy in choice, war, death, or sickness did lay siege to it, making it momentary as a sound, swift as a shadow, short as any dream, brief as the lightning in . . . then . . . uh . . . *(Forgetting his lines.)* Just pick it up somewhere.

HERMIA: If then true lovers have been ever crossed, it stands as an edict in destiny.

LYSANDER: I have an aunt and . . . uh . . . she's got a lot of money. We can get married and hide out with her. If thou loves me, then meet me in the forest tomorrow night.

HERMIA: Lysander, I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow, by his best arrow with the golden head, by the simplicity of Venus' doves, by all the vows that ever men have broke, in that same place thou hast appointed me, tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.

LYSANDER: O look. Here comes Helena. *(Nothing happens.)* I said here comes Helena. *(Crosses right and shouts.)* HERE COMES HELENA! *(HELENA enters left in a leotard with a tail, cat ears on a head band, and whiskers drawn on her face. She isn't happy about it. She crosses to Lysander and indicates Helena.)*

LYSANDER: She entered on the wrong side.

HELENA: *(No enthusiasm.)* Demetrius loves you. Your eyes are lodestars and your tongue's sweet air more tunable than lark to shepherd's ear.

HERMIA: I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA: O, that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill . . . Why do I have to wear the stupid cat costume? *(ABIGAIL enters and crosses to HELENA.)*

ABIGAIL: Because we paid for these costumes and we're going to get our money's worth!

HELENA: If you'd ordered them in time you might have gotten the right costumes for the show!

ABIGAIL: I did order them in time! The supplier lost the order!

HELENA: So why do I end up being a cat? Why couldn't I wear the poodle skirt?

ABIGAIL: Because Hermia was here on time! You were late!

HELENA: I got held up at the hair salon! I can't help it if everybody in town wants their hair done at five o'clock in the afternoon!
(*STAGE MANAGER enters and crosses to ABIGAIL.*)

STAGE MANAGER: Miss Yokle, this is the performance. (*He indicates the audience.*)

ABIGAIL: I'm so tired of her complaining! She doesn't like the show! She doesn't like the role she got! She doesn't like the way I direct! Now she doesn't like her costume!

STAGE MANAGER: Maybe we could talk about this later.

ABIGAIL: Everything has gone wrong with this production!

HERMIA: Everything goes wrong with every production.

STAGE MANAGER: (*To CAST.*) Could you hurry this along? (*He escorts ABIGAIL off stage.*)

LYSANDER: Where do we start?

HELENA: I don't know this scene very well. (*DEMETRIUS enters and hands LYSANDER a language arts textbook. DEMETRIUS exits. LYSANDER thumbs through the book.*)

LYSANDER: Let's see. Beowulf. The Canterbury Tales. Christopher Marlow. Here it is. (*To HELENA.*) You're in love with me. Remember?

HELENA: (*Sarcastic.*) How could I forget?

LYSANDER: (*To HERMIA.*) You say, "I give him curses, yet he gives me love."

HERMIA: I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

LYSANDER: (*To HELENA.*) You say, "O, that my prayers could such affection move."

HELENA: O, that my prayers could such affection move.

LYSANDER: (*To HERMIA.*) You say, "the more I hate, the more he follows me."

HERMIA: I know! The more I hate, the more he follows me.

LYSANDER: (*To HELENA.*) You say, "the more I love, the more he hateth me."

HELENA: The more I love, the more he hateth me.

LYSANDER: (*To HERMIA.*) You say . . .

HERMIA: (*Interrupting.*) I know what to say! (*Takes a deep breath, thinks for a moment.*) Okay. What do I say?

LYSANDER: "His folly is no fault of mine."

HERMIA: I knew that.

LYSANDER: So say it.

HERMIA: You already said it.

LYSANDER: Okay. How about if I start with the part where Hermia and Lysander decide to meet in the woods and run off and get married.

HERMIA: That part's really long.

LYSANDER: You're right. Why don't we leave and let Helena do her monologue. (*HERMIA and LYSANDER exit.*)

HELENA: (*Bored.*) 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.

Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;

And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.

Blah. Blah. Blah. If I tell Demetrius that Lysander is going to run off with Hermia, then maybe he'll realize how much I love him and he'll love me instead of the girl he really loves. But then why should I care? I'm just a cat. Meow. (*Sighs. Licks her paw and wipes her face. Exits. ABIGAIL enters.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 3
THE RUDE MECHANICALS

ABIGAIL: Next we meet the Rude Mechanicals, a group of would-be actors who want to present a drama for the Duke's wedding. I can't tell you, as the director of the Armadillo Flats Community Theater, I know all about would-be actors! And board members who won't support anything I want to do! And businesses that won't help out as sponsors! And audiences! We've had some of the worst audiences in the history of the theater! (STAGE MANAGER enters and crosses to ABIGAIL.)

STAGE MANAGER: We need to get on with the show.

ABIGAIL: I was giving a little explanation of the next scene.

STAGE MANAGER: But you just insulted the entire town.

ABIGAIL: I didn't mean to.

STAGE MANAGER: What would you like to say about the next scene?

ABIGAIL: A group of clueless actors . . . and boy do I know about those . . . are going to perform a play for the Duke's wedding. They meet at the home of Peter Quince and he assigns the roles and . . . well . . . I don't know what's going to happen.

STAGE MANAGER: We'll find out.

They exit. THE RUDE MECHANICALS enter and cross to the sofa. They are: PETER QUINCE, a lumberjack; SNUG, wearing jams and other Hawaiian attire; NICK BOTTOM, a mechanic; FRANCIS FLUTE, an exercise instructor in sweats; SNOUT, a hippie; and ROBIN STARVLING, a disco king. All but QUINCE and BOTTOM fight for places on the sofa. QUINCE and BOTTOM are center. QUINCE has a textbook with the script. BOTTOM has a notepad.

QUINCE: Is everybody here?

BOTTOM: Better do a role call.

QUINCE: Where's your costume?

BOTTOM: Miss Yokle didn't want me getting engine grease on the costume. I was working on a transmission and lost track of the time. (He takes a handkerchief from a pocket and wipes his face, which further smears the dirt.)

QUINCE: Here is a scroll with your names and your acting assignments.

BOTTOM: What's this play about?

QUINCE: The play is the most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe.

BOTTOM: Okay. Let's put 'er up on the rack and see what we got.
(*QUINCE unrolls the scroll.*)

QUINCE: Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver. You are to be Pyramus.

BOTTOM: Right! What's Pyramus?

QUINCE: A lover that kills himself most gallantly for love. Pyramus and Thisbe are in love. Their parents don't like each other. The couple decides to run off together and meet in the forest. Thisbe gets there first and runs into a lion, which scares the fool out of her. She drops her scarf and runs away. The lion tries to eat the scarf but can't quite choke it down. He does get blood all over it because he just ate another mammal. Pyramus shows up, finds the bloody scarf, thinks Thisbe has been eaten by a lion and kills himself on his own sword. Thisbe shows up, finds Pyramus and kills herself. The end.

ACTORS: UCK!

BOTTOM: That sounds like a downer.

FLUTE: It sounds familiar.

STARVLING: It sounds like *Romeo and Juliet*, which happened to be the next play Shakespeare wrote. Hopefully, it won't be part of the Armadillo Flats Community Theater season any time soon.

QUINCE: (*To BOTTOM.*) You're supposed to recite that poem about the raging rocks to show that you think you're a great actor or something.

BOTTOM: Oh yeah. Here's some really great acting. (*In a sing-song voice.*)

The raging rocks

And shivering shocks

Shall break the locks (*Pause.*)

And wash the socks . . .

And clean the clocks . . .

And chase the fox . . .

And rob Fort Knox . . . and that's about all I can remember.

QUINCE: It's more than you remembered at dress rehearsal. I'll call the rest of the actors. (*Reading scroll.*) Francis Flute, the bellows-mender. (*FLUTE crosses to BOTTOM and jogs in place.*)

FLUTE: I'm here and ready to burn some carbs!

QUINCE: You're Thisbe. The lady that Pyramus loves. (*BOTTOM grins.*)

FLUTE: (Looking at BOTTOM.) Uck. (*BOTTOM frowns.*)

QUINCE: Robin Starvling. (*STARVLING crosses to QUINCE.*)

STARVLING: That's me. Ready to rock. (*Takes breath spray from his pocket, sprays his breath, grins at FLUTE. She recoils.*)

QUINCE: You're Thisbe's mother.

STARVLING: (Sarcastic.) Well, that's gonna be cute.

QUINCE: Snout, the tinker. (*SNOUT crosses to QUINCE.*)

SNOUT: (Flashing peace sign.) Peace, baby.

QUINCE: You're to be Pyramus's father.

SNOUT: That's weird.

STARVLING: Shouldn't I be Pyramus's father and she be Thisbe's mother?

QUINCE: Hey! I didn't write this thing! Snug, the joiner. (*SNUG crosses to QUINCE.*)

SNUG: Aloha.

QUINCE: You're to be the lion.

SNUG: I don't memorize stuff so good.

QUINCE: You just roar.

BOTTOM: I'll be the lion. You can be Pyramus.

SNUG: I don't want to be Pyramus. I don't want to be Snug the joiner. I don't want to be a lion. I don't want to be in this stupid thing!

BOTTOM: Then why are you here?

SNUG: It counts as community service. That's what my parole officer said. (*A look of discomfort from the cast.*)

CAST: Parole officer?

SNUG: Hey! I keep telling the cops. I wasn't anywhere near that convenience store!

STARVLING: Why don't I be the lion and he can be Pyramus's father?

QUINCE: No!

BOTTOM: Why don't I do Pyramus AND Thisbe, and I can also do Thisbe's mother, Pyramus's father and the lion?

QUINCE: So you love yourself, you hate yourself, you kill yourself twice, you pretend to eat yourself, then you feel bad about the way you treated yourself? I don't think so.

SNOUT: How about if Snug is Pyramus, I'm Thisbe, Flute is Thisbe's mother, Bottom is Pyramus's father, and Starvling is the lion?

FLUTE: How about if Starvling is Pyramus, I'm Thisbe, Bottom is Thisbe's mother, Snout is Pyramus's father, and Snug is the lion?

STARVLING: How about if I'm Pyramus, Snout is Thisbe, Snug is Thisbe's mother, Flute is Pyramus's father, and Bottom is the lion?

QUINCE: (Frustrated.) NO!

SNUG: Here's an idea. How about if Bottom is Pyramus, Flute is Thisbe, Snout is Thisbe's mother, Snout is Pyramus's father, and I'm the lion.

QUINCE: That's the way I assigned the roles in the first place!

CAST: (Surprised.) It is?

QUINCE: Now ladies and gentleman, here are your scripts. Oops. I forgot the scripts. (STAGE MANAGER enters and hands a stack of textbooks to QUINCE.) Thanks. (STAGE MANAGER exits. QUINCE hands out scripts.) As I was saying, here are your scripts. Go study them and meet me in the woods in a couple of days and we'll rehearse. Any questions? (ALL raise their hands. QUINCE ignores them.) Good. I think it's time for a coffee break. (He exits, followed by the others. ABIGAIL enters.)

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

THE FAIRIES

ABIGAIL: *(To AUDIENCE.)* Now we're going to meet some mythical characters that live in the forest: Oberon, Titania, Robin Goodfellow, also known as Puck . . . *(PUCK enters dressed as a cowboy.)*

PUCK: Hi there, Miss Abigail.

ABIGAIL: Where's your costume?

PUCK: I tried on that costume. It was a little ole pair of boxer shorts and not much else.

ABIGAIL: But you're supposed to be Puck, a mischievous forest elf.

PUCK: Ma'am, I work as the foreman on the Buzzard Beak Ranch. If I was to walk on stage looking like Tarzan I'd never live it down.

ABIGAIL: Okay. Start the scene. *(She exits. COWGIRLS enter.)*

PUCK: How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

COWGIRL 1: *(Texas accent.)* Well now, who wants to know?

PUCK: The King doth keep his revels here tonight.

Take heed the Queen come not within his sight.

COWGIRL 2: You're that cute little elf fellow, aren't you?

PUCK: Yep. I am that merry wanderer of the night. You'd better tell the Queen not to show her face around Oberon.

COWGIRL 3: Too late for that. All the cowgirls are here and we're gonna do a little song. *(Their song is the Cotton-Eyed Joe. A simple dance step may be used and the lyrics may be sung unaccompanied. Dancers make a line, or circle, and dance and sing. Dancing does not need to be very good. This may also be sung as a solo, or rather than sung, it could done as a Marine chant with a leader calling out each line as the chorus echoes, marching in place.)*

DANCERS: *(Singing.)* Over hill and over dale,

We will hit the dusty trail.

Ride a horse and rope a steer,

We sure love the great frontier.

Texas is a real great place:

Lots of cowboys, lots of space.

Houston, Dallas, El Pa-so!

Texas is the place to go!

YEE-HAA!

SUZIE LYNN enters and talks to the audience.

SUZIE LYNN: I'm Suzie Lynn Higginbotham, Artistic Director of Suzie Lynn's School of Dance, which is conveniently located one block from the courthouse, next door to Earl's Pool Hall. I offer classes in tap, two step, line dancing, and classical ballet. If you think this was something, wait till you see our next concert. It's called Swan Lake Texas-style, and it's gonna be real good. So, if you always wanted to dance, get over to Suzie Lynn's School of Dance and ya'll learn how. Thank you very much. *(Exits.)*

COWGIRL 1: *(To OBERON.)* The Queen's gonna be here any minute. Better make sure the King doesn't see her.

PUCK: Those two do NOT get along, do they? *(OBERON enters left. He's Elvis. TITANIA enters right. She's a cowgirl.)*

OBERON: How ya doing? *(COWGIRLS swoon, then see TITANIA. They quickly cross to right.)* Hey! It's Titania! My wife. How ya doing there, sweetie?

TITANIA: I don't like you anymore.

OBERON: Tarry, rash wanton. Am I not thy lord?

TITANIA: Then I must be thy lady. But I think you're a rat! First of all, you're not very nice to me! Then you did one of your magic spell things and made Theseus fall in love with that sorry-excuse-for-a-queen Hippolyta!

OBERON: That is none of your business!

TITANIA: These are the forgeries of jealousy; and never, since the middle summer's spring, met we on hill, in dale, forest, to dance our ringlets to the whistling wind, but with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport!

COWGIRL 1: *(To TITANIA.)* You tell him!

OBERON: Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

TITANIA: Because he's a creep!

OBERON: So, how long are you gonna hang around here?

TITANIA: We'll be around for the big wedding. If you will patiently dance in our round and see our moonlight revels, go with us.

OBERON: I'm not so good at dancing, so I think I'll pass.

TITANIA: *(To COWGIRLS.)* Come on, girls. Let's get out of here.
(TITANIA and COWGIRLS exit.)

PUCK: That didn't go well.

OBERON: Hey Puck. Thou rememberest since once I heard a mermaid on the dolphin's back uttering such harmonious breath that the sea grew civil at her song and certain stars shot madly from their spheres to hear the sea-maid's music.

PUCK: *(Rolls eyes.)* Oh yeah.

OBERON: I saw Cupid fire off an arrow at something, and he missed and it landed on this little bitty flower. If you squeeze the insides out of that flower and put it on the eyelids of folks when they're sleeping, when they wake up they'll fall in love with the first thing they see.

PUCK: Sounds like a good trick to play on Titania. I'll go find that flower. *(PUCK exits. HELENA and DEMETRIUS enter.)*

OBERON: Somebody's coming. I'll hide and listen in to what they say. *(OBERON hides behind a box.)*

DEMETRIUS: I love thee not; therefore pursue me not.

HELENA: Come on, Demetrius. I can't be that bad.

DEMETRIUS: Do I entice you? Or rather do I not in plainest truth tell you I do not love you? And besides that, you're a cat.

HELENA: And even for that do I love you the more. And I wanted the poodle skirt!

DEMETRIUS: I am sick when I do look on thee.

HELENA: And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS: You do impeach your modesty too much to commit yourself into the hands of one that loves you not!

HELENA: Your virtue is my privilege!

DEMETRIUS: I'll run from thee and hide in the brakes and leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts!

HELENA: The wildest hath not such a heart as you. Run when you will. *(She holds onto DEMETRIUS.)*

DEMETRIUS: I will not stay thy questions. Let go of me, woman! *(He breaks away from her and exits.)*

HELENA: I'm gonna follow you! You can't get rid of me that easily! Geez, what a creep! *(She exits. OBERON comes out from behind the box. PUCK enters with two silk flowers.)*

PUCK: Here's your magic flower. *(Hands OBERON a flower.)*

OBERON: Thank you very much. There's this girl who's in love with this Athenian fellow, only he don't love her. They're running around out here somewhere. I want you to do one of your sleepy spells, take that flower, squeeze some juice in his eyes and make sure the first thing he sees when he wakes up is her.

PUCK: Fear not, my lord. Your servant shall do so. *(They exit. TITANIA and COWGIRLS enter.)*

TITANIA: Let's have a little song around the campfire 'fore we bed down for the night. *(Sung to "Home on the Range.")*

COWGIRLS: *(Singing.)* Oh, give me a place,
With a whole lot of space,
With some cows, and some pigs and a goat;
With a pond and a duck,
And an old pick-up truck,
And some boots and a real leather coat.
Home, home in the west;
Where the beef enchiladas are best;
Where the cactus and heat
Really mess up your feet,
And the coy-o-tes won't let you rest. *(Coyote howls.)*

TITANIA: Is that supposed to be restful?

COWGIRL 2: Yeah. Go to sleep. *(COWGIRLS exit. TITANIA lays down on the sofa and sleeps. OBERON enters and stands behind the sofa.)*

OBERON: What thou seest when thou dost wake, do it for thy true love take.

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