

Bottom's Tail

being

*a very short playlet drawn loosely from
Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream",
and meant for stage performance by young children.*

*By William Shakespeare (1595)
with linking and extra dialogue by D. Haden.*

Text originally by William Shakespeare is marked in red.

Characters:

PUCK – a glowing nature sprite and magical being

TITANIA – Queen of fairies

NICK BOTTOM – a simple labouring man

BOTTOM – a man transformed into an ass

PEASEBLOSSOM – a small fairy

COBWEB – a small fairy

MUSTARDSEED – a small fairy

MOTH - a small fairy-moth

And with the possibility of sundry supporting
non-speaking fairies and animals.

There are only **three speaking parts**, or four if you have two
BOTTOMs (one before and one after transformation).

It was first performed in 2006.

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no royalties due for any stage performance of it.*

Made in England, 2006. Version 1.3, October 2008.

SCENE 1 – a large woodland dell, TITANIA's bower in a corner

[Enter PUCK among the branches, TITANIA asleep below him in a flowery bower set into a woodland bank.]

PUCK: I am Puck, a sprite of woodland night,
Older than the oldest dewpond bright.

[PUCK bows to the audience. Then looks down]

I know this bank, where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxslips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet roses and with eglantine.
Here Titania, queen of fairies, sleeps sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.

[PUCK floats down a little, nearer. A purple flower appears between his outstretched fingers.]

And on this queen I'll play a queenly trick.
The juice from this flower of purple dyes,
Hit with Cupid's archery, will streak her eyes...

[PUCK drops or brushes the flower on TITANIA's eyes.]

... that she will look fond and sure in love
upon the next live creature that she espies.

[PUCK, above, pulls down a branch and looks over it, off stage. He sees BOTTOM approaching through the wood, going in the direction of TITANIA's dell. Faint sound FX of BOTTOM approaching.]

PUCK: And there! A' strolling to her wooded den,
Comes a bold mechanic man! I'll hide me awhile,
And listen on his musings then...

[Enter BOTTOM, boldly, but masking fear]

[PUCK exits, by fading into the dark treetops.]

BOTTOM: Well, here I am! For I, Bottom,
Have come to hear the tale my friends do stage.

I have a fine part in this their play.
Most prominent, most *bold* am I, upon the page.

Though... I do not like this woody night...

[Bottom shivers, partly in fear]

Yet I *shall* abide it, and will not let it give me *any* fright!

[After a pause, a very large MOTH swoops and flies into his face and then around his feet, scaring BOTTOM further]

Oohh, oh, no! Oohh, oh, no!
Away, away, away, fickle moth!
Up, up, to the winds you bloweth!

[As BOTTOM chases away the MOTH, PUCK re-appears among the dark treetops, suspended above the dell]

PUCK: This bold mechanic man,
Who comes here to practice his part,
I shall *change* ... just because I can
... and it suits my art.

[PUCK calls softly down to BOTTOM, the MOTH departed]

Oh Bottom ... oh Bottom ...

[PUCK, raising a finger to the audience and addressing them, while BOTTOM looks around startled by the new voice he hears ...]

... for that is his name.

[PUCK calls down to BOTTOM, plucking and casting a green branch as if it were a magic wand.]

Though art changed,
Though art... TRANSLATED!

[PUCK fades amid lighting FX as BOTTOM 's head changes to that of an ass. BOTTOM also grows an ass's tail.]

BOTTOM: Oooh, I do feel **marvellous hairy about the face.....**
EEYY ORR! I must ... EEYY ORR! Or I must ... I must ... **Shave myself before I go a'bed tonight.** EEYY ORR!

[BOTTOM wanders around the dell, bemused, feeling his hairy chin and twitching his new tail, 'Ey or' -ing softly in a puzzled manner.]

The curtain falls.

SCENE 2 – the same woodland dell, but nearer TITANIA's bower

[BOTTOM stumbles upon TITANIA's bower]

BOTTOM: Eyy, ORR! EEEEEYY, ORR!

[BOTTOM's new voice wakes TITANIA. Her bower fully opens, and she falls instantly in love with him, due to the effect of PUCK's magic flower-juice.]

TITANIA: **What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?**

BOTTOM: Eyy, ORR! EEEEEYY, ORR!

TITANIA: Ah... thou art as *wise* in voice, as thou art *beautiful* in face!

[TITANIA adoringly contemplates BOTTOM's 'beauty']

TITANIA: **I am a spirit of no common rate,**
And I do love... thee! Therefore, stay with me?

BOTTOM: Eyy, ORR! EEEEEYY, ORR!

TITANIA: Ah, such sweet acceptance.
Love, **I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee.**
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! and Mustardseed!

[PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MUSTARDSEED emerge from the dark wood around TITANIA's bower. BOTTOM greets them by kneeling and wagging his ears toward them.]

BOTTOM: **Scratch my head, Peasblossom?**
I am such a tender ass, if my hair but do tickle me,
I must scratch. Eyy, ORR! EEEEEYY, ORR!
Sharp Mustardseed, be a **venturous fairy,**
to **seek the squirrel-hoard, and fetch me new nuts!**
Eyy, ORR! EEEEEYY, ORR!
Good Cobweb, get your weapons in your hand,
And trap me a red-hipped honey bee
On the top of a thistle, and good sire,
Bring me the honey bag. But,
Before you fly, oh both do my bidding,
And help Peaseblossom to scratch.
I am so **marvellous hairy about the face,**
And my ears do itch.

TITANIA: **Come, wait upon him** as he bids,
Then ready him, and **lead him to my bower...**

[All fairies scratch and tickle at BOTTOM]

BOTTOM: Eyy, ORR! EEEEEYY, ORR! ...

TITANIA: ...Oh, but, **tie up my love's tongue,**
Bring him silently ... or in small measure.

[COBWEB exits, after a circuit of the stage chasing a honey bee. MUSTARDSEED departs, after a circuit of the stage chasing a squirrel. They may become confused and comically start chasing each other's animal.]

[PEASEBLOSSOM scratches BOTTOM's head, and uses the opportunity to muffle his voice by some means]

[The fairies also scratch BOTTOM's ears, bind his muzzle or ponies bit on, drag him in a procession over and into the bower of TITANIA. BOTTOM and TITANIA lie back together.]

TITANIA: Sweet creature, **sleep thou,**

And I shall wind you in my arms. Fairies... begone.

[The fairies go, but then they creep back again to watch]

TITANIA: Fairies begone!

[The fairies go, but then turn back again to watch, giggling]

TITANIA: Fairies begone! And be **all ways** away!

[The fairies depart at last, and exit, giggling. BOTTOM yawns.]

BOTTOM: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me...

[TITANIA and BOTTOM sleep. The canopy of the fairy bower shuts slowly and fully, as if by magic.

[PUCK appears above the dell once again, and peers down into the bower (now hidden from the audience)]

PUCK: Bottom has had a fine 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.

[PUCK looks down for a while, enjoying the scene, raising his eyebrows occasionally]

Now Bottom yawns... so are *all* my jests complete.
At dawn I will restore this ass to manly form.

[PUCK strews another enchantment on the bower.
Then he sighs and looks feyly up at the sky.]

But... if I do divine the stars correct, they say
one future day there will be a *ballad* of this dream?
Hmm, **be it so**. Then I would name it... *Bottom's Tail*.

[BOTTOM's tail slips out of the closed canopy,
and begins waving lazily and happily at the audience.]

The end.

PROPS LIST:

A large flowery dell (containing the flower types named on page 2) of a magical and beautiful type, suitable for the queen of the fairies. With a hidden bower a little to one side and back. The bower is open-to-the-sky, but with a covering or closing lid at the front that faces the stage and allows it to be completely covered to view from the audience.

The bower may have a Grecian couch at its centre, facing the audience.

Treetrops with green branches above the stage. Woodbine should be entangled among the branches. A place or invisible-to-the-audience set of platforms behind them for Puck to stay out of sight and appear. Puck should appear to be airborne – a back-projected webcam feed might even be used.

A fake purple flower on a string or wire. This could also be done by spotlight.

A fake large moth on a string or wire. This could also be done by spotlight.

An old hollow log, into which Bottom might fall out-of-sight for his transformation into an ass. This could also be used to switch players, if having two actors play Bottom.

A fake large honey bee on a string or wire.

A fake squirrel on a string or wire.

An ass or donkey head or mask, full-face and hairy, with long upward-pointing ears.

A muzzle, feedbag, gag, or pony's bit for silencing Bottom.

A second tail, of a donkey or horse, fitted behind the bower door and operated by a string or wire.

+ lights, costumes, sound FX.

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