

The Forgeries of Jealousy

By Patti Veconi

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Here's a charming, fantasy romp of fairies, elves, and sprites and their adventures--and misadventures--in love. And is all is happening at the same time of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The sprites of Shakespeare's fairy kingdom are awaiting the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. The fairy king and queen, Oberon and Titania, should bless the upcoming wedding, but have been locked in a dispute over custody of an Indian changeling child for nearly two years. The sprites clamor to rekindle old flames and encourage new ones while making it their business to reunite the king and queen. This play is a fun opportunity for students to enjoy the comedy and energy of Shakespeare. It also can be staged as easily or lavishly as desired and still work its magic.

In this tight, well-plotted script, the action builds to almost farcical levels at some points. The interplay among all the characters is excellent, and there are plenty of scenes with only a few actors at a time, making it easy to rehearse segments without having to balance too many schedules. With a goal for inclusivity, some roles and associated friendships may fall outside of traditional norms. The representation of any such couple is done innocently, sweetly, and naturally. This play has rich themes of friendship, loyalty, allegiance, and of course, jealousy.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This show is dedicated to the Bay Ridge Prep Thespians, National Art Honor Society members, and the original cast of "The Forgeries of Jealousy" at Bay Ridge Prep Upper School in Brooklyn, NY:

TITANIA: Gemma Essex	ROBIN GOODFELLOW: Caden Guy
OBERON: Kenyon Lovett	CHIFFCHAFF: Frank Calacanis
DEMETRIUS: Phoenix Ward	GANNET: Alina Stoll
HELENA: Ryann Parcell	DUNNOCK: Jack Walsh
STARLING: Stephanie Stathoudakis & Derin Aksoy	EXTRAS/CREW: Nora Driskell, Danny Calacanis
MUSTARDSEED: Sophia Feder	STAGE MANAGER: Sylvie Weekes
COBWEB: Catherine Mack	PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Simón Brueggemann
PEASEBLOSSOM: Arabella Neff	CO-DIRECTOR & DRAMATURG: Cait Hynes
MOTH: MJ Evangelista	
CRICKET: Abigail Ryvkin	
BALSAM: Zahava Nor & Cecily Veto	

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(5 m, 7 w, and 3 flexible, extras)

TITANIA: (W) Shakespeare's queen of the fairies.

OBERON: (M) Shakespeare's king of the fairies.

DEMETRIUS: (M) Shakespeare's young lover. May double as fairy or elf for Prologue, Scene 3, and Epilogue.

HELENA: (W) Shakespeare's young lover. May double as fairy or elf for Prologue, Scene 3, and Epilogue.

FAIRIES / SPRITES THAT SERVE TITANIA

STARLING: (W) Titania's first fairy and Robin's former lover – until their king and queen forced them apart. She desperately wants to see peace restored in the fairy kingdom.

MUSTARDSEED: (W) Largely motivated by her need to be loved and recognized, she is slow to realize what both true love and true friendship really mean.

COBWEB: (W) Smart and sensible. In love with Mustardseed whose interests she puts before her own – until she learns what it means to look out for herself, too.

PEASEBLOSSOM: (W) Sensitive and nurturing; the only fairy that genuinely cares about the changeling. In love with Chiff but conflicted about her duties.

MOTH: (W) Naïve about matters of love, dismissive of the romances happening around her until she discovers her own feelings for someone.

CRICKET: (Flexible) Balsam's best friend and a true sprite, always playing, carefree, and into mischief.

BALSAM: (Flexible) Cricket's best friend and a true sprite, always playing, carefree, and into mischief.

(Cont'd.)

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ELVES / SPRITES THAT SERVE OBERON

ROBIN: (M) Oberon's first fairy, also known as Puck. Although he serves Oberon unconditionally, it is Starling whose approbation he truly desires. Like Starling, he is motivated to work toward seeing peace restored between their king and queen.

CHIFFCHAFF: (M) In love with Peaseblossom. Charmingly uncomplicated and confidently generous with advice on matters of love.

GANNET: (Flexible) Unclear about matters of love, but pretty sure it should be avoided.

DUNNOCK: (M) Infatuated with Mustardseed and wears his heart on his sleeve.

EXTRAS: Sprites that join in the Prologue, Epilogue, Scene 3 revels, and any scene transitions.

NOTE: All sprites are gender fluid and directors should cast freely and alter pronouns as needed.

SETTING

Woodlands outside of Athens.

TIME

The days before the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta.

ACT I

Prologue

(AT RISE: A bare stage. ROBIN enters and addresses the audience. He is holding Barbie and Ken dolls dressed in Greek clothing.)

ROBIN: Welcome to Athens. This guy, *(Holding up the Ken doll.)* Theseus, is the boss around here – the governor, mayor, whatever...

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Duke!

ROBIN: Duke, right, and we're here to celebrate his wedding to this lovely lady, Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. For some reason, they decided to invite their exes to the wedding – which is...complicated. She *(Indicating the Barbie doll.)* used to be with my boss, Oberon, king of the fairies, *(Enter OBERON.)* while this guy *(Indicating Ken doll.)* used to hook up with Oberon's wife, the fairy queen Titania. *(Enter TITANIA.)* So – yeah – complicated... especially because King Oberon and Queen Titania have been separated by their own lover's quarrel for some time now.

(As TITANIA speaks, ALL SPRITES enter and form their alliances behind the KING and QUEEN accordingly, with their backs to the audience.)

TITANIA: These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou has disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
Hath every pelting river made so proud

TITANIA: *(Cont'd.)*

That they have overborne their continents:
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

OBERON: Do you amend it, then: it lies in you:
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy
To be my henchman.

(TITANIA starts to speak but ROBIN interrupts.)

ROBIN: Aaaand, there we have it – the real issue and reason Mommy and Daddy are fighting: over a little changeling boy. Regarding these two...*(Indicating the dolls.)* They're in that happy, distracted pre-wedding place. Anyway, we're not going to focus too much on them. *(Tossing the dolls offstage. TITANIA and OBERON preen, stepping forward to take the stage.)* Actually, this story really isn't about the two of you either. *(THEY look at him, incredulous.)* I mean, you brought us here so – thank you for that. And we will be mentioning you quite a bit because – as you said, there's this debate and dissension between you, but... you can probably take a break for the next hour or so.

(TITANIA and OBERON leave.)

ROBIN: *(Cont'd.)* We're here to tell you about what's going on with everyone else gathered in Athens for this wedding – in particular, those of us who belong to Oberon and Titania. Things have become estranged between all of us these last couple of years –

(STARLING turns just her head toward ROBIN.)

ROBIN: *(Cont'd.)* and some of us have history and...well...

(ROBIN pauses and looks at STARLING.)

STARLING: Well, what?

(SFX: Crack of thunder.)

ALL: Rain!

(ALL exit with ROBIN and STARLING holding a look between them and exiting last.)

Scene 1

(AT RISE: COBWEB sits on a stump – her hands are being tied behind her back by CRICKET and BALSAM, who giggle. MUSTARDSEED sits on the ground near them, picking burrs out of a jacket.)

COBWEB: Is this really necessary?

MUSTARDSEED: *(To the FAIRIES.)* Make sure the knot is tight.

COBWEB: *(To the FAIRIES.)* Why are you helping her?

BALSAM: Because it's funny.

CRICKET: It isn't personal, Cobweb. We would just as happily have done some mischief against Mustardseed.

MUSTARDSEED: Thanks a lot!

BALSAM: Come on, Cricket.

(BALSAM and CRICKET exit, giggling. MUSTARDSEED continues picking at her jacket.)

COBWEB: It's your fault about the burrs. Untie me now and I'll help you pick them off your jacket.

MUSTARDSEED: Wouldn't you like that? If I let you go, you'll have no reason to give me what I want.

COBWEB: I have no reason to give it now! Besides, you won't leave me like this – you can't.

MUSTARDSEED: I can and I will. Just wait. (*Picking at the burrs.*) These hateful burrs! If you hadn't made me chase you through that thicket, none of this would have happened. (*Beat.*) I hate Athens.

COBWEB: No, if you hadn't agreed to steal something just to impress Robin Goodfellow, then none of this would have happened.

MUSTARDSEED: Impress him? Cobweb, I love him – I have always loved him,

COBWEB: I thought you have always loved Dunnock?

MUSTARDSEED: That was when I was younger.

COBWEB: We're fairies – we don't age.

MUSTARDSEED: Well, I did get more mature – and now it's Robin that I care for, but he wants me to prove my love, so I promised him I could get those shoes. Now please help me, I know you have them.

COBWEB: But I don't have them.

MUSTARDSEED: You know where they are, which is just as good as having them.

(*Pause.*)

COBWEB: How do you know what you feel for him is love – and why should you have to prove it? He doesn't even like you.

MUSTARDSEED: He does like me. You don't understand how it feels.

COBWEB: No, / like you...and I do understand how it feels...I think.

MUSTARDSEED: You're jealous.

COBWEB: I'm your friend. I'm such a good friend; I did half your chores for you today while you disappeared to play with that *bad* fellow.

MUSTARDSEED: (*Dreamily.*) He took me to play in the most fantastic hammock that he's strung between two giant cypress trees on the side of that mountain over there.

COBWEB: When all the ground is mud and marsh a hammock must be sweet indeed.

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MUSTARDSEED: He promised to add a canopy of flowers over it when I go back to see him tomorrow.

COBWEB: You are a fool, Mustardseed.

MUSTARDSEED: And you are a bore! You used to be fun.

(Pause. COBWEB is hurt.)

COBWEB: I must do what the queen bids of me – and most often that is –

MUSTARDSEED: Mind the child.

COBWEB: Yes, mind the child, and dress the child, and feed the child, and pet the child, and bathe –

MUSTARDSEED: Which is precisely how I know that you know where his shoes are!

(Pause.)

COBWEB: How is the jacket coming?

MUSTARDSEED: *(Dejectedly looking at her burred jacket.)* I'm still sorting it out.

COBWEB: I could help you if my hands weren't tied.

MUSTARDSEED: *(Pouting and still picking at the burrs.)* Do you remember what it was like before the changeling came? When we played freely with the elves of King Oberon's train? If you weren't so busy minding that precious child all the time, you would see that the rest of us are miserable.

COBWEB: You think I like the changeling?

MUSTARDSEED: I think you like to feel important.

COBWEB: *(Stung.)* Well, I don't like him, not a wit...some little boy mortal – and stupid besides? I don't know why the queen adores him so much.

MUSTARDSEED: Perhaps, if he doesn't have his shoes, the queen will carry him with her all the time and never put him down and you won't have to mind him at all.

COBWEB: Or perhaps, having lost his shoes, I will no longer be trusted and it will be *you* who must carry the changeling about.

MUSTARDSEED: You are purposefully not seeing that we have this small window of time before the wedding of Hippolyta and Theseus to restore balance and make things right between the king and our queen.

COBWEB: Who told you that? Robin?

MUSTARDSEED: Not directly. I overheard him talking with Starling. Well – more like arguing – but they were agreed that this is our opportunity – now, while we are all here visiting in Athens together.

COBWEB: We aren't visiting *together*. We are just all here at the same time to attend a wedding.

MUSTARDSEED: And how much fun will that be if they are still fighting? At this rate, we won't be going to the wedding at all.

COBWEB: Explain how my helping you steal the child's shoes will do anything to restore peace? I don't suppose Robin asked Starling to prove her feelings for him in this way?

MUSTARDSEED: Robin and Starling are ancient history. They can barely stand each other.

COBWEB: If you say so.

(Pause.)

MUSTARDSEED: Are they really made of Indian silk?

COBWEB: The shoes? I suppose so; they are very silly. Why do mortals not go barefoot as we do?

MUSTARDSEED: The reason I need the shoes is so that Robin can surprise King Oberon.

COBWEB: That would make it Robin's reason, not yours. And why does he think taking something of Titania's will help them stop fighting?

MUSTARDSEED: I'm not clever enough to know; but I do know that it would please Robin to please the king and please me to please Robin.

(SFX: A crack of thunder is heard. They BOTH look up at the sky.)

End of Freeview

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