

## Oberon, the Fairy Prince.

### Ben Jonson

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This etext is dedicated to Matt Steggle at Sheffield Hallam University; Thank you for criticism, support, and inspiration. —AJ.

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BEN JONSON.

## OBERON, THE FAIRY PRINCE.

A MASQUE OF PRINCE HENRY'S.

*The first face of the scene appeared all obscure, and nothing perceived but a dark rock, with trees beyond it, and all wildness that could be presented : till, at one corner of the cliff, above the horizon, the moon began to shew, and rising, a SATYR was seen by her light to put forth his head and call.*

1 *Sat.* CHROMIS ! Mnasil ! None appear ?  
 See you not who riseth here ?  
 You saw Silenus, late, I fear. --  
 I'll prove if this can reach your ear.

*He wound his cornet, and thought himself answered ;  
 but was deceived by the echo.*

O, you wake then ! come away,  
 Times be short are made for play ;  
 The humorous moon too will not stay : --  
 What doth make you thus delay ?  
 Hath his tankard touch'd your brain ?  
 Sure, they're fallen asleep again :  
 Or I doubt it was the vain  
 Echo, did me entertain.  
 Prove again--

[ *Wound his cornet the second time, and found it.* ]

I thought 'twas she !  
 Idle nymph, I pray thee be  
 Modest, and not follow me :  
 I not love myself, nor thee.

*Here he wound the third time, and was answered by  
 another satyr, who likewise shewed himself.*

Aye, this sound I better know :  
 List ! I would I could hear moe.

*At this they came running forth severally, to the  
 number of ten, from divers parts of the rock,  
 leaping and making antick actions and gestures ;  
 some of them speaking, some admiring : and  
 amongst them a SILENE, who is ever the prefect  
 of the Satyrs, and so presented in all their chori  
 and meetings.*

2 *Sat.* Thank us, and you shall do so.  
 3 *Sat.* Aye, our number soon will grow.  
 2 *Sat.* See Silenus!  
 3 *Sat.* CERCOPS too!  
 4 *Sat.* Yes. What is there now to do ?  
 5 *Sat.* Are there any nymphs to woo ?  
 4 *Sat.* If there be, let me have two.

*Silen.* Chaster language ! These are nights,  
Solemn to the shining rites  
Of the Fairy Prince, and knights  
While the moon their orgies lights.

2 *Sat.* Will they come abroad, anon ?

3 *Sat.* Shall we see young OBERON !

4 *Sat.* Is he such a princely one,  
As you spake him long agon ?

*Silen.* Satyrs, he doth fill with grace  
Every season, every place ;  
Beauty dwells but in his face ;  
He's the height of all our race.

Our Pan's father, god of tongue,  
Bacchus, though he still be young,  
Phoebus, when he crowned sung,  
Nor Mars when first his armor rung,  
Might with him be named that day :  
He is lovelier, than in May  
Is the spring, and there can stay  
As little, as he can decay.

*Omn.* O, that he would come away !

3 *Sat.* Grandsire, we shall leave to play  
With Lyaeus now ; and serve  
Only OBERON.

*Silen.* He'll deserve  
All you can, and more, my boys.

4 *Sat.* Will he give us pretty toys,  
To beguile the girls withal ?

3 *Sat.* And to make them quickly fall.

*Silen.* Peace, my wantons ! he will do  
More than you can aim unto.

4 *Sat.* Will he build us larger caves ?

*Silen.* Yes, and give you ivory staves,  
When you hunt ; and better wine --

1 *Sat.* Than the master of the vine ?

2 *Sat.* And rich prizes, to be won,  
When we leap, or when we run ?

1 *Sat.* Ay, and gild our cloven feet ?

3 *Sat.* Strew our heads with powder sweet ?

1 *Sat.* Bind our crooked legs in hoops  
Made of shells, with silver loops ?

2 *Sat.* Tie about our tawny wrists  
Bracelets of the fairy twists ?

4 *Sat.* And, to spight the coy nymphs' scorns,  
Hang upon our stubbed horns  
Garlands, ribands, and fine posies --

3 *Sat.* Fresh as when the flower discloses ?

- 1 *Sat.* Yes, and stick our pricking ears  
With the pearl that Tethys wears.
- 2 *Sat.* And to answer all things else,  
Trap our shaggy thighs with bells ;  
That as we do strike a time,  
In our dance shall make a chime --
- 3 *Sat.* Louder than the rattling pipes  
Of the wood gods --
- 1 *Sat.* Or the stripes  
Of the taber ; when we carry  
Bacchus up, his pomp to vary.
- Omn.* O, that he so long doth tarry !
- Silen.* See ! the rock begins to ope,  
Now you shall enjoy your hope ;  
'Tis about the hour, I know.

*There the whole scene opened, and within was discovered the frontispiece of a bright and glorious palace, whose gates and walls were transparent. Before the gates lay two SYLVANS, armed with their clubs, and drest in leaves, asleep. At this the Satyrs wondering, Silenus proceeds :*

- Silen.* Look ! does not his palace show  
Like another sky of lights ?  
Yonder, with him, live the knights,  
Once, the noblest of the earth,  
Quicken'd by a second birth :  
Who, for prowess, and for truth,  
There are crown'd with lasting youth :  
And do hold, by Fate's command,  
Seats of bliss in Fairy land.  
But their guards, methinks, do sleep !  
Let us wake them.-- Sirs, you keep  
Proper watch, that thus do lie  
Drown'd in sloth !
- 1 *Sat.* They have ne'er an eye  
To wake withal.
- 2 *Sat.* Nor sense, I fear ;  
For they sleep in either ear.
- 3 *Sat.* Holla, Sylvans ! -- sure they're caves  
Of sleep these, or else they're graves.
- 4 *Sat.* Hear you, friends ! -- who keeps the keepers?
- 1 *Sat.* They are the eighth and ninth sleepers !
- 2 *Sat.* Shall we cramp them ?
- Silen.* Satyrs, no.
- 3 *Sat.* Would we had Boreas here, to blow

- Off their heavy coats, and strip them.
- 4 *Sat.* Ay, ay, ay ; that we might whip them.
- 3 *Sat.* Or that we had a wasp or two  
For their nostrils.
- 1 *Sat.* Hairs will do  
Even as well : take my tail.
- 2 *Sat.* What do you say to a good nail  
Through their temples ?
- 3 *Sat.* Or an eel,  
In their guts, to make them feel ?
- 4 *Sat.* Shall we steal away their beards ?
- 3 *Sat.* For Pan's goat, that leads the herds ?
- 2 *Sat.* Or try, whether is more dead,  
His club, or the other's head ?
- Silen.* Wags, no more : you grow too bold.
- 1 *Sat.* I would fain now see them roll'd  
Down a hill, or from a bridge  
Headlong cast, to break their ridge-  
Bones : or to some river take 'em,  
Plump ; and see if that would wake 'em,
- 2 *Sat.* There no motion yet appears.
- Silen.* Strike a charm into their ears.

*At which the Satyrs fell suddenly into this catch.*

Buz, quoth the blue flie,  
Hum, quoth the bee :  
Buz and hum they cry,  
And so do we.  
In his ear, in his nose,  
Thus, do you see ? -- [*They tickle them.*]  
He eat the dormouse ;  
Else it was he.

*The two Sylvans starting up amazed, and betaking  
themselves to their arms, were thus questioned by  
Silenus :*

- Silen.* How now, Sylvans ! can you wake ?  
I commend the care you take  
In your watch ! Is this your guise,  
To have both your ears and eyes  
Seal'd so fast ; as these mine elves  
Might have stol'n you from yourselves ?
- 3 *Sat.* We had thought we must have got  
Stakes, and heated them red-hot,  
And have bored you through the eyes,

- With the Cyclops, ere you'd rise.
- 2 *Sat.* Or have fetch'd some trees to heave  
Up your bulks, that so did cleave  
To the ground there.
- 4 *Sat.* Are you free  
Yet of sleep, and can you see  
Who is yonder up aloof ?
- 1 *Sat.* Be your eyes yet moon-proof ?
- 1 *Syl.* Satyrs, leave your petulance,  
And go frisk about and dance ;  
Or else rail upon the moon :  
Your expectance is too soon.  
For before the second cock  
Crow, the gates will not unlock ;  
And, till then, we know we keep  
Guard enough, although we sleep.
- 1 *Sat.* Say you so ? then let us fall  
To a song, or to a brawl :  
Shall we, grandsire ? Let us sport  
And make expectation short.
- Silen.* Do, my wantons, what you please.  
I'll lie down and take mine ease.
- 1 *Sat.* Brothers, sing then, and upbraid,  
As we use yond' seeming maid.

## SONG.

Now, my cunning lady : moon,  
Can you leave the side so soon,  
Of the boy, you keep so hid?  
Midwife Juno sure will say,  
This is not the proper way,  
Of your paleness to be rid.  
But, perhaps, it is your grace  
To wear sickness in your face,  
That there might be wagers laid  
Still, by fools, you are a maid.

Come, your changes overthrow,  
What your look would carry so ;  
Moon, confess then, what you are,  
And be wise, and free to use  
Pleasures that you now do lose.  
Let us Satyrs have a share.  
Though our forms be rough and rude,  
Yet our acts may be endued  
With more virtue : every one

Cannot be ENDYMION.

*Here they fell suddenly into an antick dance full of gesture and swift motion, and continued it till the crowing of the cock : at which they were interrupted by Silenus.*

*Silen.* Stay, the cheerful Chanticleer  
Tells you that the time is near : --  
See, the gates already spread !  
Every Satyr bow his head.

*There the whole palace opened, and the nation of Faies were discovered, some with instruments, some bearing lights, others singing ; and within, afar off in perspective, the knights masquers sitting in their several sieges : at the further end of all, OBERON, in a chariot, which, to a loud triumphant music, began to move forward, drawn by two white bears, and on either side guarded by three Sylvans, with one going in front.*

SONG.

Melt earth to sea, sea flow to air,  
And air fly into fire,  
Whilst we in tunes, to Arthur's chair  
Bear Oberon's desire ;  
Than which there's nothing can be higher,  
Save JAMES, to whom it flies :  
But he the wonder is of tongues, of ears, of eyes.

Who hath not heard, who hath not seen,  
Who hath not sung his name ?  
The soul that hath not, hath not been ;  
But is the very same  
With buried sloth, and knows not fame,  
Which him doth best comprise :  
For he the wonder is of tongues, of ears, of eyes.

*By this time the chariot was come as far forth as the face of the scene. And the Satyrs beginning to leap and express their joy for the unused state and solemnity, the foremost SYLVAN began to speak.*

1 *Syl.* Give place, and silence ; you were rude too late ;  
 This is a night of greatness, and of state,  
 Not to be mixt with light and skipping sport ;  
 A night of homage to the British court,  
 And ceremony due to Arthur's chair,  
 From our bright master, OBERON the fair ;  
 Who, with these knights, attendants, here preserv'd  
 In Fairy land, for good they have deserv'd  
 Of yond' high throne, are come of right to pay  
 Their annual vows ; and all their glories lay  
 At's feet, and tender to this only great,  
 True majesty, restored in this seat ;  
 To whose sole power and magic they do give  
 The honor of their being ; that they live  
 Sustain'd in form, fame, and felicity,  
 From rage of fortune, or the fear to die.

*Silen.* And may they well. For this indeed is he,  
 My boys, whom you must quake at, when you see.  
 He is above your reach ; and neither doth,  
 Nor can he think, within a Satyr's tooth :  
 Before his presence you must fall or fly.  
 He is the matter of virtue, and placed high.  
 His meditations, to his height, are even :  
 And all their issue is akin to heaven.  
 He is a god o'er kings ; yet stoops he then  
 Nearest a man, when he doth govern men ;  
 To teach them by the sweetness of his sway,  
 And not by force. He's such a king as they,  
 Who're tyrants' subjects, or ne'er tasted peace,  
 Would, in their wishes, form for their release.  
 'Tis he that stays the time from turning old,  
 And keeps the age up in a head of gold.  
 That in his own true circle still doth run ;  
 And holds his course as certain as the sun.  
 He makes it ever day, and ever spring,  
 Where he doth shine, and quickens every thing,  
 Like a new nature : so that true to call  
 Him, by his title, is to say, He's all.

1 *Syl.* I thank the wise Silenus for his praise.  
 Stand forth, bright FAIES and ELVES, and tune your lays  
 Unto his name ; then let your nimble feet  
 Tread subtile circles, that may always meet  
 In point to him ; and figures, to express  
 The grace of him and his great emperess.  
 That all, that shall to-night behold the rites,  
 Perform'd by princely Oberon, and these knights,

May, without stop, point out the proper heir  
Design'd so long to Arthur's crowns and chair.

SONG.

BY TWO FAIES.

1 *Faie*. Seek you majesty, to strike ?  
    Bid the world produce his like.  
2 *Faie*. Seek you glory, to amaze ?  
    Here let all eyes stand at gaze.  
Cho.    Seek you wisdom, to inspire  
    Touch them at no other's fire.

1 *Faie*. Seek you knowledge, to direct ?  
    Trust to his without suspect.  
2 *Faie*. Seek you piety, to lead ?  
    In his footsteps only tread.  
Cho.    Every virtue of a king,  
    And of all, in him, we sing.

Then the lesser Faies dance forth their dance ;  
which ended, a full SONG follows by all the  
voices.

The solemn rites are well begun ;  
    And though but lighted by the moon,  
They shew as rich, as if the sun  
    Had made this night his noon.  
But may none wonder that they are so bright,  
The moon now borrows from a greater light :  
    Then, princely *Oberon*,  
    Go on,  
    This is not every night.

OBERON and the knights dance out the first  
masque dance, which was followed with this

SONG.

Nay, nay,  
You must not stay,  
Nor be weary yet ;  
This is no time to cast away ;  
Or for Faies so to forget  
The virtue of their feet.

Knotty legs, and plants of clay,  
 Seek for ease, or love delay.  
 But with you it still should fare  
 As with the air of which you are.

After which, they danced forth their second  
 masque dance, and were again excited by a

SONG.

- 1 *Faie*. Nor yet, nor yet, O you in this night blest,  
 Must you have will, or hope to rest.
- 2 *Faie*. If you use the smallest stay,  
 You'll be overta'en by day.
- 1 *Faie*. And these beauties will suspect  
 That their forms you do neglect,  
 If you do not call them forth.
- 2 *Faie*. Or that you have no more worth  
 Than the coarse and country Fairy,  
 That doth haunt the hearth, or dairy.

Then followed the measures, corantos, galliards,  
 &c., till PHOSPHORUS the day-star appeared,  
 and called them away ; but first they were in-  
 vited home by one of the Sylvans, with this

SONG.

Gentle knights,  
 Know some measure of your nights.  
 Tell the high-graced *Oberon*,  
 It is time that we were gone.  
 Here be forms so bright and airy,  
 And their motions so they vary,  
 As they will enchant the Fairy,  
 If you longer here should tarry.

*Phos*. To rest, to rest ! the herald of the day,  
 Bright Phosphorus, commands you hence ; obey.  
 The moon is pale, and spent ; and winged night  
 Makes headlong haste to fly the morning's sight :  
 Who now is rising from her blushing wars,  
 And with her rosy hand puts back the stars.  
 Of which myself the last, her harbinger,  
 But stay to warn you, that you not defer

Your parting longer : then do I give way,  
As Night hath done, and so must you, to Day.

*After this, they danced their last dance into the work;  
And with a full SONG the star vanished, and the  
whole machine closed.*

O yet how early, and before her time,  
The envious morning up doth climb,  
    Though she not love her bed !  
What haste the jealous Sun doth make,  
His fiery horses up to take,  
    And once more shew his head !  
Lest, taken with the brightness of this night,  
The world should wish it last, and never miss his light.

*F I N I S.*

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