

Lysander, Helena, Demetrius, Hermia

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A Midsummer Night's Dream ACT 3. SC. 2

ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee. 115
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON

Stand aside. The noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

ROBIN

Then will two at once woo one. 120
That must needs be sport alone.
And those things do best please me
That befall prepost'rously.

They step aside.

Begin

Enter Lysander and Helena.

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears. 125
Look when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

HELENA

You do advance your cunning more and more. 130
When truth kills truth, O devilish holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath and you will nothing
weigh.

Your vows to her and me, put in two scales, 135
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS, *「waking up」*

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine! 140
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealèd white, high Taurus' snow,
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow 145
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
If you were civil and knew courtesy, 150
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so, 155
To vow and swear and superpraise my parts,
When, I am sure, you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena.
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise, 160
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so, 165
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.
And here with all goodwill, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part.
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death. 170

HELENA

Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.

If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.

My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned,

And now to Helen is it home returned,

175

There to remain.

LYSANDER

Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,

Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.

Look where thy love comes. Yonder is thy dear.

180

Enter Hermia.

HERMIA, [to Lysander]

Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,

The ear more quick of apprehension makes;

Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,

It pays the hearing double recompense.

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;

185

Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.

But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,

190

Fair Helena, who more engilds the night

Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee
know

The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

195

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.—
Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid, 200
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived,
To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent
When we have chid the hasty-footed time 205
For parting us—O, is all forgot?
All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion, 210
Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
Had been incorporate. So we grew together
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition, 215
Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
So with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first, 'like' coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crownèd with one crest.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder, 220
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly; 'tis not maidenly.
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA

I am amazèd at your words. 225
I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face,
And made your other love, Demetrius,

Who even but now did spurn me with his foot, 230
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love (so rich within his soul)
And tender me, forsooth, affection, 235
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unloved?
This you should pity rather than despise. 240

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up.
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 245
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare you well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER

Stay, gentle Helena. Hear my excuse, 250
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena.

HELENA

O excellent!

HERMIA, *['to Lysander']*

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS, *['to Lysander']*

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat. 255
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak
 ['prayers.']
Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not. 260

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

「She takes hold of Lysander.」

LYSANDER

Away, you Ethiop! 265

DEMETRIUS, *「to Hermia」*

No, no. He'll

Seem to break loose. *「To Lysander.」* Take on as you
would follow,

But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER, *「to Hermia」*

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose, 270
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA

Why are you grown so rude? What change is this,
Sweet love?

LYSANDER Thy love? Out, tawny Tartar, out!

Out, loathèd med'cine! O, hated potion, hence! 275

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth, and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS

I would I had your bond. For I perceive
A weak bond holds you. I'll not trust your word. 280

LYSANDER

What? Should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

HERMIA

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me? Wherefore? O me, what news, my love?
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander? 285
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left
me.

Why, then, you left me—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say? 290

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life,
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt.
Be certain, nothing truer, 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena. 295

['Hermia turns him loose.']

HERMIA

O me! *['To Helena.']* You juggler, you cankerblossom,
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i' faith.
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame, 300
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA

"Puppet"? Why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare 305
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low? 310
How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak!
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA

I pray you, though you mock me, 'gentlemen,'¹
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst; 315
I have no gift at all in shrewishness.
I am a right maid for my cowardice.
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her. 320

HERMIA

"Lower"? Hark, again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—
Save that, in love unto Demetrius, 325
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He followed you; for love, I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence and threatened me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too.
And now, so you will let me quiet go, 330
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further. Let me go.
You see how simple and how fond I am.

HERMIA

Why, get you gone. Who is 't that hinders you?

HELENA

A foolish heart that I leave here behind. 335

HERMIA

What, with Lysander?

HELENA

With Demetrius.

LYSANDER

Be not afraid. She shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS

No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

HELENA

O, when she is angry, she is keen and shrewd. 340
She was a vixen when she went to school,
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA

"Little" again? Nothing ¹but¹ "low" and "little"?

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

345

LYSANDER

Get you gone, you dwarf,

You minimus of hind'ring knotgrass made,

You bead, you acorn—

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious

In her behalf that scorns your services.

350

Let her alone. Speak not of Helena.

Take not her part. For if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

LYSANDER

Now she holds me not.

355

Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,

Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS

"Follow"? Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.

*Demetrius and Lysander exit.*¹

HERMIA

You, mistress, all this coil is long of you.

*Helena retreats.*¹

Nay, go not back.

360

HELENA

I will not trust you, I,

Nor longer stay in your curst company.

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray.

My legs are longer though, to run away. *She exits.*¹

HERMIA

I am amazed and know not what to say. *She exits.*¹ 365

OBERON, ¹to Robin¹

This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st,

Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully.

ROBIN

Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.

Did not you tell me I should know the man

By the Athenian garments he had on?

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Encl