

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Lysander/Helena/Hermia/Demetrius), 3.2 | Comedy

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

HELENA

You do advance your cunning more and more.

These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?

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

[Awaking] O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

HELENA

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent

To set against me for your merriment.

Can you not hate me, as I know you do,

But you must join in souls to mock me too?

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;

For you love Hermia; this you know I know:

And here, with all good will, with all my heart,

In Hermia's love I yield you up my part.

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.

Enter HERMIA

HERMIA

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;

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.

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

The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Injurious Hermia! Most ungrateful maid!

HERMIA

I am amazed at your passionate words.

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,

To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,

Precious, celestial?

HERMIA

I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA

Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up.

LYSANDER

Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:

My love, my life my soul, fair Helena!

HELENA

O excellent!

HERMIA

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS

If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER

Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.

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.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than she can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come!

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER

Away, you octopus!

DEMETRIUS

No, no; he'll

Seem to break loose; but yet come not.

LYSANDER

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose,

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 tyrant, out!

Out, loathed medicine! Hated potion, hence!

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.

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?

Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?

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?

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life;

And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;

That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me! You juggler! You canker-blossom!
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from her?

HELENA

Fine, i'faith!
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
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
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,
Let her not hurt me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

HERMIA

Lower!?! Hark, again!

HELENA

Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
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.

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's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA

'Little' again! Nothing but 'low' and 'little'!
Let me come to her.

LYSANDER

Get you gone, you dwarf;
You bead, you acorn.

DEMETRIUS

Speak not for 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;
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS

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

HERMIA

Exit LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS

You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:
Nay, go not back.

HELENA

I will not trust you, I.

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away.

HERMIA

I am amazed, and know not what to say.

Exit

Exit