

A Midsummer Night's Dream

3.2

Enter Oberon, King of Fairies

OBERON

I wonder if Titania be awaked,
Then what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter Robin Goodfellow

Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit?
What nightrule now about this haunted grove?

5

ROBIN

My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene and entered in a brake, 15
When I did him at this advantage take.
An ass's noll I fix'd on his head.
Anon his Thisbe must be answer'd,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy±±
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky±±
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly,
And at our stamp here o'er and o'er one falls. 25
He `Murder' cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus
strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats±±from yielders all things catch. 30
I led them on in this distracted fear,

And left sweet Pyramus translated there;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON

This falls out better than I could devise. 35
But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes
With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

ROBIN

I took him sleeping; that is finished, too;
And the Athenian woman by his side,
That when he waked of force she must be eyed. 40
Enter Demetrius and Hermia

OBERON

Stand close. This is the same Athenian.

ROBIN

This is the woman, but not this the man.
[They stand apart]

DEMETRIUS

O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

HERMIA

Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse; 45
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50
As he to me. Would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the centre creep, and so displease
Her brother's noontide with th'Antipodes. 55
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.
So should a murderer look±±so dead, so grim.

DEMETRIUS

So should the murdered look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty.
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear 60
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

HERMIA

What's this to my Lysander? Where is he?

Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

DEMETRIUS

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA

Out, dog; out, cur. Thou driv'st me past the bounds 65

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?

Henceforth be never numbered among men.

O, once tell true; tell true, even for my sake.

Durst thou have looked upon him being awake, 70

And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch!

Could not a worm, an adder do so much?±±

An adder did it, for with doubler tongue

Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS

You spend your passion on a misprised mood.

I am not guilty of Lysander's blood, 75

Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

HERMIA

I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

DEMETRIUS

And if I could, what should I get therefor?

HERMIA

A privilege never to see me more;

And from thy hated presence part I so. 80

See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

Exit

DEMETRIUS

There is no following her in this fierce vein.

Here therefore for a while I will remain.

So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe, 85

Which now in some slight measure it will pay,

If for his tender here I make some stay.

He lies down and sleeps

OBERON *(to Robin)*

What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite,

And laid the love juice on some true love's sight.

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90

Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.

ROBIN

Then fate o'errules, that, one man holding troth,

A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

OBERON

About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find.
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer
With sighs of love that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here.
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

95

ROBIN

I go, I go—look how I go, 100
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

Exit

OBERON

Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.

He drops the juice on Demetrius' eyelids

When his love he doth espy, 105
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Enter Robin Goodfellow, the puck

ROBIN

Captain of our fairy band, 110
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be! 115

OBERON

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

ROBIN

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

[They stand apart.]

Enter Helena, Lysander [following her]

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears.
Look when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears. 125
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,
When truth kills truth±±O devilish holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er? 130
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.
Your vows to her and me put in two scales
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgement when to her I swore.

HELENA

Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er. 135

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

[HELENA]

□

DEMETRIUS (*awaking*)

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

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,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me±±as I know you do±± 150
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,
To vow and swear and superpraise my parts
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts. 155

You both are rivals and love Hermia,
And now both rivals to mock Helena.
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise±±
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision. None of noble sort 160
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.
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.
And here with all good will, with all my heart, 165
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.

HELENA

Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none. 170
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guestwise sojourned
And now to Helen is it home returned,
There to remain.

LYSANDER Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS

Disparage not the faith thou dost not know, 175
Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear.

Enter Hermia

Look where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

HERMIA

Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes.
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense, 180
It pays the hearing double recompense.
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? 185

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide:
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery O's and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee know 190
The hate I bare thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA *[aside]*

Lo, she is one of this confederacy.
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.±± 195
Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid,
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 200
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us±±O, is all quite forgot?
All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
Have with our needles created both one flower, 205
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
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, 210
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.
So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
Two of the first±±like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one and crowneÁd with one crest. 215
And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
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. 220

HERMIA

I am amazeÁd at your passionate words.

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±± 225
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot±±
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, 230
And tender me, forsooth, affection,
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±± 235
This you should pity rather than despise.

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. 240
This sport well carried shall be chronicled.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well. 'Tis partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy. 245

LYSANDER

Stay, gentle Helena, hear my excuse,
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. 250
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.

DEMETRIUS *(to Helena)*

I say I love thee more than he can do.

255

LYSANDER

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

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come.

HERMIA Lysander, whereto tends all this?

[She takes him by the arm]

LYSANDER

Away, you Ethiopie.

DEMETRIUS No, no, sir, yield.

Seem to break loose, take on as you would follow,

But yet come not. You are a tame man; go.

260

LYSANDER *(to Hermia)*

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 Tartar, out;

Out, loatheÁd med'cine; O hated potion, hence.

265

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.

LYSANDER

What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?

270

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?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

275

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, doubt. 280
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA *(to Helena)*

O me, you juggler, you canker blossom,
You thief of love±±what, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA Fine, i'faith. 285

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
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. 290
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
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 295
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
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 *(to Demetrius and Lysander)*

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen, 300
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst.
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 305
That I can match her±±

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 310
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,
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.

315

HERMIA

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

HELENA

A foolish heart that I leave here behind.

320

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.
She was a vixen when she went to school,
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

325

HERMIA

Little again? Nothing but 'low' and 'little'?
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

LYSANDER

Get you gone, you dwarf,
You *minimus* of hind'ring knot-grass made,
You bead, you acorn.

330

DEMETRIUS

You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
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.

335

LYSANDER

Now she holds me not.
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.
Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius

HERMIA

You, mistress, all this coil is long of you. 340
Nay, go not back.

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.
Exit

HERMIA
I am amazed, and know not what to say. 345
Exit
[Oberon and Robin come forward]

OBERON
This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st,
Or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully.

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?±± 350
And so far blameless proves my enterprise
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;
And so far am I glad it so did sort
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBERON
Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight. 355
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way. 360
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius,
And from each other look thou lead them thus
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep 365
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep.
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye±±
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight. 370
When they next wake, all this derision

Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ, 375
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmeÁd eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

ROBIN

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast, 380
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach ghosts, wand'ring here and there,
Troop home to churchyards; damneÁd spirits all
That in cross-ways and floods have burial
Already to their wormy beds are gone, 385
For fear lest day should look their shames upon.
They wilfully themselves exiled from light,
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON

But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport, 390
And like a forester the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blesseÁd beams
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But notwithstanding, haste, make no delay; 395
We may effect this business yet ere day.

Exit

ROBIN

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down.
I am feared in field and town.
Goblin, lead them up and down. 400
Here comes one.

Enter Lysander

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

ROBIN *[shifting place]*

Here, villain, drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

ROBIN *[shifting place]* Follow me then
To plainer ground.

[Exit Lysander]

Enter Demetrius

DEMETRIUS *[shifting place]* Lysander, speak again. 405
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

ROBIN *[shifting place]*
Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child, 410
I'll whip thee with a rod. He is defiled
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS *[shifting place]* Yea, art thou there?

ROBIN *[shifting place]*
Follow my voice; we'll try no manhood here.
Exeunt