

Enter Puck.

- PUCK 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.
- PUCK 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.

*Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.***BEGIN**

- 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.

123 come] qq; comes F

113 fee reward.

114 fond pageant foolish scene or spectacle. This reminds us that Oberon and Puck here make an audience for a kind of play within the play.

119 alone 'by itself', or perhaps more strongly 'of a unique kind' (*OED* sv 5).

121 SD Lysander and Helena do not see Oberon and Puck (who are 'invisible', as Puck has to be at 402 ff.), or notice the sleeping Demetrius; it adds to the comedy, of course, if he is right under their noses. The lovers speak in rhyme to 104, when the mood changes as their quarrel becomes bitter.

124 Look when Whenever. Common usage in Shakespeare's time.

124-5 vows... appears i.e. when vows are born so (in weeping), nothing but truth appears in their nativity.

127 badge of faith i.e. his tears.

129 truth...fray The 'truth' Lysander now tells Helena destroys the 'truth' of his vows to Hermia, in a clash that is 'holy' as involving vows of devotion, and devilish since one vow must be false.

131 nothing weigh i.e. because the oaths cancel each other, and both, as idle 'tales', have no weight.

133 tales fictions, falsehoods.

134-5 See 2.2.121-4 and n., and pp. 31-2 above.

- HELENA Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er. 135
 LYSANDER Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.
 DEMETRIUS (*Waking.*)
 O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
 To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
 Crystal is muddy! O, how ripe in show
 Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! 140
 That pure congealèd 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!
 HELENA O spite! O Hell! I see you all are bent 145
 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,
 But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150
 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.
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia; 155
 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
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort 160
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

137 SD *Waking*] F (*Awa.*); not in Qq 141 congealèd] Q2, F; coniealed Q1 145 all are] Qq; are all F
 151 were] Qq; are F 159 derision! None] *Theobald*; derision None Q; derision, none Q2; derision; none F

136 loves not you The flow of rhyme is momentarily broken as Demetrius intervenes.

138 eyne See 1.1.242 and n.

141 Taurus' A chain of mountains in Turkey. Brooks notes that Taurus is twice referred to in Seneca's *Hippolytus*, which he believes Shakespeare used as a source for this play (see pp. 144–5 below); in John Studley's translation, in Thomas Newton's edition (1581), Act 2, line 382, the 'watry snowes' melt on the 'toppe of Taurus hill'. Taurus is also mentioned in Golding's Ovid, II, 275.

143 As E. W. Talbert noted in *Elizabethan*

presumably holds up one or both hands in a 'No, no, don't touch me' gesture, quite misunderstood by Demetrius.

143–4 The inflated protestations of Demetrius culminate in the comic exaggeration of this final image. A white skin was highly prized; compare *Oth.* 5.2.4: 'that whiter skin of hers than snow'.

146 set against attack (*OED* Set v 128a).

150 in souls with all your beings. (Compare the phrase 'heart and soul'.)

153 parts qualities.

159 sort character.

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; 165
 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.
 If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170
 My heart to her but as guest-wise 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,
 Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear. 175
 Look where thy love comes: yonder is thy dear.

Enter Hermia.

HERMIA 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. 180
 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? 185

LYSANDER Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
 Fair Helena – who more engilds the night
 Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
 [To Hermia] Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make
 thee know

167 till] Q1; to Q2, F 172 Helen is it] Q1 (*Helena*, is it); *Helena* it is Q2, F 175 aby] Q1; abide Q2, F
 182 thy] QQ; that F 189 SD] *This edn*; not in QQ, F

166 bequeath assign, make over. Once normal usage, as at *John* 1.1.149 (*OED* sv v 4a).

169 I will none I want no part of her.

171 to her...sojourned travelled to her. *OED* sv 4 cites one example of this meaning from 1608, but there are overtones here of the more usual sense 'lodged with'.

175 aby it dear pay dearly for it (= a-buy; see 426).

177 Hermia's speech might follow directly after her exit lines, 2.2.151–62, strengthening the sense of a continuous action.

188 oes and eyes stars. 'Oes' were round spangles used to ornament dress for a glittering effect; there is also a pun on the letters 'o' and 'i'.

The hate I bare thee made me leave thee so? 190
 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, 195
 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 200
 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, 205
 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, 210
 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 crownèd with one crest.
 And will you rent our ancient love asunder, 215
 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,

210 an] Qq; a F 213 first, like] *Theobald, conj. Folks*; first life Qq, F; first life, F2

190 hate I bare thee See 2.2.143–8 above.

194 in spite of in scorn of.

195 Rhyming couplets give way to blank verse here as the quarrel grows more serious, and the emotional temperature rises.

203 artificial highly skilled in art (*OED* sv a 6b).

206 in one key i.e. in perfect harmony. They were not merely singing in the same key, as would obviously be necessary, but were altogether ('voices and minds') in accord.

208 incorporate united in one body.

213–14 The 'first' is the first 'tincture' (= colour) mentioned in the elaborate process of describing a coat-of-arms; according to the rules of heraldry, it

thus refers to the 'field' (i.e. the background of the coat-of-arms). Staunton noticed that the heraldic image was suggested by the word 'partition' (210), which is the correct term for the divisions of a 'parted' or a quartered shield. A 'parted' (209) shield is one divided into equal halves; so Helena's image is of a shield divided into halves of the same colour ('Two of the first'), and thus in effect not differentiated. This coat-of-arms is granted by right to one person ('Due but to one') and surmounted by a single crest (a hart or heart).

215 rent tear, rend.

Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA I am amazed at your passionate words. 220

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, 225

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, 230

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. 235

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. 240

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.

LYSANDER Stay, gentle Helena: hear my excuse, 245

My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

HELENA O, excellent!

HERMIA [*To Lysander*] Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

220 passionate] F; not in Qq 237 Ay, do!] *Rowe subst.*; I doe Q1; I, do, Q2, F (does) 243 my] Q1; mine Q2, F
247 SD] *Wells*; not in Qq, F

220 *passionate* Not in Qq; the word may have been restored in F from the prompt-book (compare 5.1.186 and n.), but NS, rejecting it as a compositor's guess, adopted J. W. Mackail's suggestion that the line began '*Her. Helen* I am amazed...', and the compositor of Q1 dropped '*Helen*' mistaking it for a duplicated speech heading.

225 *spurn...foot* Recalling Helena's words to Demetrius at 2.1.204-5.

237 *Persever* Accented on the second syllable, as always in Shakespeare; 'persevere', accented on the first syllable, became common usage during the seventeenth century.

237 *sad* serious.

239 *hold...up* i.e. keep up, maintain.

242 *argument* subject of contention.