

- HERMIA His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200
- HELENA None but your beauty; would that fault were mine!
- HERMIA Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;  
Lysander and myself will fly this place.  
Before the time I did Lysander see,  
Seemed Athens as a paradise to me. 205
- O then, what graces in my love do dwell,  
That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell?
- LYSANDER Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:  
Tomorrow night, when Phoebe doth behold  
Her silver visage in the watery glass, 210  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass  
(A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal),  
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.
- HERMIA And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie, 215  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet,  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.  
Farewell, sweet playfellow; pray thou for us, 220  
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius.  
Keep word, Lysander; we must starve our sight  
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.
- LYSANDER I will, my Hermia.

*Exit Hermia*

Helena, adieu!

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you. *Exit Lysander* 225

- HELENA How happy some o'er other some can be!  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

200 no fault] Q1; none Q2, F    205 as] Q1; like Q2, F    207 unto a] Q1; into Q2, F    216 sweet] *Theobald*; sweld Qq, F    219 stranger companies] *Theobald*; strange companions Qq, F    225 dote] Qq; dotes F

204 *Lysander* At first sight, this might be thought an error for Demetrius, who has made Hermia wretched, but her paradox is that Lysander's 'graces' in his love, by provoking the jealousy of Demetrius and her father's anger, have made Athens hell for her.

207 *turned . . . hell?* Compare Helena's determination to 'make a heaven of hell' at 2.1.243.

209 *Phoebe* Another name for Diana, goddess of the moon; compare 73, 89 above.

212 still invariably.

214-20 This establishes the long intimate friendship of Hermia and Helena, the background to their quarrel in Act 3; see 3.2.198 ff.

215 *faint pale*. Referring simply to the pale yellow colour of the flowers.

219 *stranger companies* the fellowship of strangers. *Theobald's* emendation of 'strange companions' has been generally accepted as necessary for the rhyme.

226 *other some* i.e. some others.

But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;  
 He will not know what all but he do know.  
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes, 230  
 So I, admiring of his qualities.  
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,  
 Love can transpose to form and dignity.  
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
 And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind. 235  
 Nor hath love's mind of any judgement taste;  
 Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste;  
 And therefore is love said to be a child  
 Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.  
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear, 240  
 So the boy Love is perjured everywhere;  
 For, ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,  
 He hailed down oaths that he was only mine,  
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt. 245  
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:  
 Then to the wood will he, tomorrow night,  
 Pursue her; and for this intelligence,  
 If I have thanks it is a dear expense;  
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain, 250  
 To have his sight thither, and back again. *Exit*

229 do] Qq; doth F    239 so oft] Q1; oft Q2; often F    248 this] Qq; his F

232-45 Helena's lines on the power of love to transform, and the lack of connection between seeing and judgement, relate to the changes of the lovers in Act 3, and especially the infatuation of Titania with Bottom.

232 holding no quantity i.e. having no relation to the value put upon them by love.

234 Love is conventionally aroused through the eyes (see 222, 242), as Helena knows, but the lover sees beauty where others do not, and so looks with the mind, or fancy (see 155 above), but not the judgement. Compare the proverb 'Love is without reason' (Tilley L517) and see 2.2.121-4 and n.

235 Cupid... blind Cupid was generally represented as blind in medieval and Renaissance art and literature, partly because his arrows hit or miss at random, and partly with reference to the sensual nature of the love they stir, sometimes contrasted

with a clear-sighted Platonic love. By transference, the lover is 'blinded about what he loves, so that he judges wrongly of the just, the good and the honourable', as Plato said in his *Laws*; see Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 1939, section IV, 'Blind Cupid', pp. 95-128.

237 figure symbolise.

240 waggish playful, mischievous.

240 game sport.

242 eyne The plural 'eyes' had begun to displace Middle English 'eyne' in the fourteenth century, so that this form was archaic in Shakespeare's time, and not much used except, as here, for rhyme.

248 intelligence information.

249 a dear expense a great sacrifice. She does not expect to be thanked, because he will begrudge doing so, just as he would a costly burden of expenditure.