

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE at the Folger Library



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?

LYSANDER

Away!

DEMETRIUS

No, no; he'll

Seem to break loose; you are a tame man, go!

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

Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

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?

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.

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;

Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest

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 him?

HELENA

Fine, in faith!

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.

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;

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

I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,

Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;

Let her not strike 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.

I evermore did love you, Hermia,

Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you;

Save that, in love unto Demetrius,

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.

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HERMIA
Why, get you gone: who is it that hinders you?

HERMIA
I am amazed, and know not what to say.

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

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 hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

DEMETRIUS
Let her alone: speak not of Helena;
Take not her part.

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