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A Reimagining of Act 3 Scene 2 From A Midsummer Night's Dream

An eerie fog lit by dim moonlight illuminated the dark forest, casting shadows and giving the illusion of movement. Motes of light floated lazily in the air, unaware of my mental turmoil.

“Why do you think that I am tricking you?” Lysander cried. His voice sounded from close behind me, so I increased my speed. “I truly do love you. Would I be crying if my feelings weren’t genuine? I shed tears because my love is unrequited, and that is a true badge of my faith! I love you with all of my heart. Forever and always. How can this all seem like a trick to you?”

Thoughts raced through my head as I stumbled through the overgrown forest. The minimal moonlight shone just brightly enough for me to make out what was ahead of me, but not for me to get there easily.

“This has to be a joke,” I said. “Are these vows not what you gave to Hermia just yesterday? How can your seemingly immovable love so quickly change from one target to the next? Your tears and vows are as binding as the air around me.”

“I was not of right mind when I proclaimed my love for her!”

“And you must still be not right of mind!”

He went silent as we entered a clearing. Demetrius was lying on the ground, asleep, and my heart pounded when I caught sight of him. I slowed down, then slowly moved towards him. Lysander broke into the clearing soon after me and paused after he saw the sleeping Demetrius.

“Is this about Demetrius?” he said. “Give him up! He does not love you and never will. He has proclaimed his eternal love for Hermia!”

Demetrius twitched, and his eyes opened, meeting mine. My heart stopped.

“Oh, Helena. How beautiful you are,” Demetrius said. The sleep clung to his voice.

What are you saying?

“You are like a goddess descended! How could I have even been so blind as to spurn your love? Your lips tempt me as no other has before.”

Surely, this must be a joke.

“I love you with all of my heart! Your beauty would make Aphrodite jealous! I beg of you to take my hand and let us walk a flowery path together until the end of our days!”

The stillness of the air fueled the silence that soon followed. The slight fog had lightened, and I could make out Demetrius’s fervent look. The air around me felt crushing, and I shut my eyes to rid myself of Demetrius’s disgusting face.

“BOTH OF YOU!” I cried. “You are all evil! Does playing with my emotions give you happiness? I know you both have unchanging feelings of love for Hermia and not me. Is this some joke you are playing? Your love for Hermia had been strong enough for attempted murder. Now you claim you love another? Why do you make a fool out of me? Why would you stoop so low as to toy with my feelings? My feelings are real, and I know yours are not. Why do you both hate me so?”

“Demetrius,” Lysander said. “Cease your lies. I know you love Hermia, so I will be the bigger man and let you have her. While I claimed to have loved her before, those feelings are gone and are now Helena’s.”

I heard the crunching of leaves as someone else entered the clearing. My emotions were in turmoil, wishing that what Demetrius said was true, but knowing that was not the case.

“Lysander!” Hermia approached us. “Why did you leave me all alone? What could have pried you from my side?”

“Helena,” Lysander replied. “My love for her far outweighs any that I could ever feel for you. Please leave us, Your presence disgusts me.”

It must have been Hermia. She must have concocted this farce to make a fool out of me. Am I that amusing to toy with? Do they have any humanity?

“You!” I said to Hermia. “You must be the cause of this. You have conspired with these two fools to spite me. Our bond was as close as sisters. You were a dear friend of mine, and this is how you repay me? Does all the time we spent together mean nothing to you? You trample on my feelings and now connive at my suffering. While you may find joy in this joke, this betrayal is one I will never forgive nor forget!”

“You seem to hold strong feelings against me,” Hermia said. “While I do not hate you, it seems you hate me?”

She sounded confused, but I knew she was faking.

“You were the one who made Lysander proclaim false love for me. You were the one who persuaded Demetrius to do the same. Only you have the power to convince both of them to do such a thing. You used their love for you to accomplish your nefarious plan. Did you think I was unaware of the hate both men share for me? Did you think I would calmly accept their feelings, then collapse when they eventually leave me for you? Did you think I was so woefully unaware of Lysander and Demetrius’s intense love for you? Love so intense that it caused Demetrius to set out to kill Lysander. How could such a love so quickly change?”

It made no sense. Why would everyone turn against me? We all had an amicable relationship, and although I professed my love for Demetrius countless times, I knew it was unrequited. And how could Hermia do such a thing to me? She knows my feelings for Demetrius are real, and for her to incite fake feelings to give me hope was one of the cruelest things she

could have done. Maybe, though, it was the forest. Maybe the forest was driving everyone mad, and we would all soon return to our normal lives. One where Lysander and Demetrius love Hermia. Such a ridiculous thought crossed my mind, however, it was ruled out by reason.

“I don’t know what you mean,” said Hermia.

“You do! You do! You fake ignorance with your phony facade, yet I know you find some perverse joy in the suffering you bring me. You jest and joke behind my back and think I wouldn’t notice? If you felt any pity towards me, you wouldn’t make such a ridiculous excuse that you didn’t know. This plan must have been in the works for quite some time, and I was a fool for not picking up on it and believing you all. If everyone hates me, then I too will join them and do away with myself. I presume the devil would make a more reliable friend than you all, so I will be off to meet with him.”

Why should I stay in a world where everyone finds joy in my suffering? My existence must be some cruel joke by the gods.

“Wait!” Lysander cried. “Please listen to me, beautiful Helena. You are my reason for living. If there is no one to love, why should I live?”

“He speaks lies,” Demetrius said. “No one loves you more than I. My love is unending.”

“Your words mean as much as the leaves beneath my shoes,” Lysander said. “How could no one love you more than Demetrius if I am still alive?”

He turned to Demetrius.

“If you truly love Helena as you so claim, prove it!”

“Lysander,” Hermia interjected. “What is this nonsense? Why do you spurn me as you do? Did we not promise our undying love for each other? Did we not decide to brave the dangers of fleeing Athens together to be with each other forever?”

“Love you?” Lysander said. “How could I ever love such a hateful person? I would sooner die a thousand deaths before I loved someone like you.”

“Surely you don’t mean that.”

“I do!” Lysander shouted.

“See how he spurns his past love?” Demetrius said to me. “His words and love are untrustworthy. He would sooner kill Hermia, the woman he loves.”

“While I do hate her verily, I would not dare to cause any bodily harm,” Lysander said.

“Your claims right now do me more harm than any torture ever could!” Hermia cried.

“What happened to the Lysander I once knew? Are you truly Lysander? Maybe you are a fake! Some changeling. Am I truly Hermia?”

She paused, then turned to me.

“You! You must be the cause of this! You were so jealous of their love for me that you decided to steal Lysander from me!”

I could not believe that she was blaming me when she had orchestrated this entire situation. How could she have the audacity to do such a thing?

“Have you no morals? Or maybe your short fuse has finally blown, and these are your true colors,” I said. “You are no maiden. You are a demon! Your shoddy disguise can not fool me any longer!”

“Short?” she exclaimed. “Why, I see you have stooped so low as to criticize my height. Does throwing such childish insults give you pleasure? It must have been your height that won Lysander over. Am I now so hated because she is taller than I? I may be shorter than you, but I am still tall enough to gauge your eyes out.”

She lunged at me. There was a madness in her eyes that I could barely make out from the dimness of the moonlight. She must be possessed.

“Although you make fun of me with you false proclamations love, save me from this lowly beast,” I cried out to Lysander and Demetrius.

They quickly intercepted her and restrained her.

“Low?! Again with your jabs at my height?!” Hermia cried as she struggled against the two restraining her. “Let me go! Let me at her!”

“You despicable thing,” Lysander said. “You dwarf. You inchworm. Your child-like height matches your child-like actions. You midget.”

Hermia seemed shocked and stopped struggling.

“You’re trying to suck up to Helena,” Demetrius said. “I see what you’re doing. Look how Helena scorns you. She does not wish for your love, yet you push it on her anyway! Your flippant love will never move the pure and wise Helena.”

“You...” Lysander was at a loss for words. “My love for Helena is unwavering and unbroken. It can not be changed by your guile words.” He let go of Hermia, who was still in shock. “Let’s settle this like men, away from the sight of women. Follow me if you are the man you dare claim to be.”

Lysander ran away into the forest, disappearing into the fog that seemed denser than before.

“Why you cur!” Demetrius swiftly followed, leaving Hermia and me alone in the clearing.

The silence was palpable, and I could feel the damp air clinging to my skin in an unnerving manner.

“This whole thing is your fault,” I heard Hermia mutter as she came back to her senses. She glared at me with hate-filled eyes and took a step towards me. I took a step backward. She took another forward, and I took another backward.

“You may be itching for a fight, but I am faster than you.” I spun around and hastily ran away.

“You!” Hermia exclaimed, and I heard her footsteps behind me as I stumbled through the dark forest. The fog grew denser, and Hermia’s footsteps grew quieter.

I ran for as long as my body would hold out, and when I stopped to catch my breath, I could not hear Hermia behind me. Perhaps she got lost in the dense forest and heavy fog. I began walking in a random direction, hoping it was the direction of Athens. Strangely enough, I felt drowsy, and the earth below me looked welcoming enough for me to take enough. Surely, if I were sane, I would question why I suddenly felt so drowsy or why the ground seemed more appealing than my bed.

Too much had happened in this one night to be believable. I would have never imagined that those I once considered friends would have concocted such a malicious plan. I was resolved to return to Athens in the morning and finally rid myself of their hateful company. My eyelids suddenly felt heavy, and my body felt lethargic, but as I walked a few more steps, my confidence in returning to Athens that night broke. I decided to sleep until morning, when the fog would clear, and I would no longer have to travel by dim moonlight.

As I lay on the ground, I swore I saw the fog move as if someone else, or two, were there. I also thought I could make out the bodies of Lysander and Demetrius a few paces away, but for some strange reason, I did not care. I just wished for the night to be over and morning to arrive.

As I drifted off to sleep, I imagined some strange small creature hovering around me with a  
Cheshire grin seemingly singing something I couldn't hear.