

A Midsummer Night's Dream abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Chauvinism

Situation: In his verbal petition to Theseus, Egeus demands that his beautiful and young daughter Hermia have but two options: either she marry a man acceptable to him or she must die. His motive is his belief that Lysander, her boyfriend/fiancé, is an unacceptable prospective son in law.

Egeus to Theseus

As she is mine, your lordship, I beg the
Ancient privilege of Athens: either she
Marry whom I choose or she dies. Come I
With complaint 'gainst Hermia, my daughter.
Stand forth, Demetrius. This man hath my
Consent to wed her. This man, Lysander,
Hath given her rhymes, hath interchanged love
Tokens with her, softly sung verses of
Love, and impressed her fantasy with rings
And trifles, messengers of prevailment
In unhardened youth. His crass cunning brings
Disobedience from her, having bent
My daughter's filched heart. Please, my gracious duke,
Do not this forceful ancient law rebuke.

THESEUS: What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid. You are but a form in wax by him imprinted, and within his power to leave the figure or disfigure it. Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA: So is Lysander. I would my father looked but with my eyes.

THESEUS: Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA: But I beseech your Grace that I may know the worst that may befall me in this case if I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS: Either to die the death, or to abjure forever the society of men. Know if you yield not to your father's choice you can endure the livery of a nun.

HERMIA: So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord. My soul consents not to give sovereignty.