



There was a law in the city of Athens which gave to its citizens the power of compelling<sup>1</sup> their daughters to marry whomsoever they pleased; for upon a daughter's refusing to marry the man her father had chosen to be her husband, the father was empowered by this law to cause her to be put to death; but as fathers do not often desire the death of their own daughters, even though they do happen to prove a little refractory<sup>2</sup>, this law was seldom or never put in execution<sup>3</sup>, though perhaps the young ladies of that city were not unfrequently threatened by their parents with the terrors of it.

There was one instance, however, of an old man, whose name was Egeus, who actually did come before Theseus (at that time the reigning duke of Athens), to complain that his daughter Hermia, whom he had commanded to marry Demetrius, a young man of a noble Athenian family, refused to obey him, because she loved another young Athenian, named Lysander. Egeus demanded justice of Theseus, and desired that this cruel law might be put in force against his daughter.

<sup>1</sup> compel [kəm'pel] (v.) 強迫

<sup>2</sup> refractory [rɪ'fræktəri] (a.) 執拗的

<sup>3</sup> execution [,eksɪ'kju:ʃən] (n.) 執行；實行



Hermia pleaded<sup>4</sup> in excuse for her disobedience, that Demetrius had formerly professed love for her dear friend Helena, and that Helena loved Demetrius to distraction<sup>5</sup>; but this honorable reason, which Hermia gave for not obeying her father's command, moved not the stern Egeus.



Theseus, though a great and merciful prince, had no power to alter the laws of his country; therefore he could only give Hermia four days to consider of it and at the end of that time, if she still refused to marry Demetrius, she was to be put to death.

When Hermia was dismissed from the presence of the duke, she went to her lover Lysander, and told him the peril<sup>6</sup> she was in, and that she must either give him up and marry Demetrius, or lose her life in four days.

<sup>4</sup> plead [pliːd] (v.) 抗辯

<sup>5</sup> distraction [di'strækʃən] (n.) 發狂

<sup>6</sup> peril ['perəl] (n.) 危險



Lysander was in great affliction<sup>7</sup> at hearing these evil tidings<sup>8</sup>; but recollecting that he had an aunt who lived at some distance from Athens, and that at the place where she lived the cruel law could not be put in force against Hermia (this law not extending beyond the boundaries of the city), he proposed to Hermia that she should steal out of her father's house that night, and go with him to his aunt's house, where he would marry her.



“I will meet you,” said Lysander, “in the wood a few miles without the city; in that delightful wood where we have so often walked with Helena in the pleasant month of May.”

<sup>7</sup> affliction [ə'flɪkʃən] (n.) 痛苦；苦難

<sup>8</sup> tidings ['taɪdɪŋz] (n.) [古代用法] (複數形) 消息；音信



To this proposal Hermia joyfully agreed; and she told no one of her intended flight<sup>9</sup> but her friend Helena. Helena (as maidens will do foolish things for love) very ungenerously resolved<sup>10</sup> to go and tell this to Demetrius, though she could hope no benefit from betraying her friend's secret, but the poor pleasure of following her faithless lover to the wood; for she well knew that Demetrius would go thither<sup>11</sup> in pursuit of Hermia.



Hermia told Helena of her intended flight to her friend Helena.

The wood in which Lysander and Hermia proposed to meet, was the favorite haunt of those little beings known by the name of *Fairies*.

<sup>9</sup> flight [flaɪt] (n.) 逃亡；逃走

<sup>10</sup> resolve [rɪ'zɔːlv] (v.) 決定；決心

<sup>11</sup> thither ['θɪðər] (adv.) 〔舊時用法〕到彼處



5 Oberon the king, and Titania the queen of the Fairies, with all their tiny train<sup>12</sup> of followers, in this wood held their midnight revels<sup>13</sup>.

Between this little king and queen of sprites there happened, at this time, a sad disagreement; they never met by moonlight in the shady walks of this pleasant wood, but they were quarreling, till all their fairy elves<sup>14</sup> would creep<sup>15</sup> into acorn-cups and hide themselves for fear.

12 train [treɪn] (n.) 成縱隊行進的若干人、車輛等隊伍

13 revel ['revəl] (n.) 作樂；狂歡享樂

14 elf [elf] (n.) 小精靈（複數形作 elves）

15 creep [kriːp] (v.) 爬行；匍匐



PUCK And now they never meet in grove or green,  
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,  
But, they do square.

Act 2, Scene 1





The cause of this unhappy disagreement was Titania's refusing to give Oberon a little changeling<sup>16</sup> boy, whose mother had been Titania's friend; and upon her death the fairy queen stole the child from its nurse, and brought him up in the woods.

The night on which the lovers were to meet in this wood, as Titania was walking with some of her maids of honor, she met Oberon attended by his train of fairy courtiers<sup>17</sup>.

"Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania," said the fairy king.

The queen replied, "What, jealous Oberon, is it you? Fairies, skip hence; I have forsworn<sup>18</sup> his company."

"Tarry<sup>19</sup>, rash fairy," said Oberon; "am not I thy lord? Why does Titania cross her Oberon? Give me your little changeling boy to be my page<sup>20</sup>."

"Set your heart at rest," answered the queen; "your whole fairy kingdom buys not the boy of me." She then left her lord in great anger.

"Well, go your way," said Oberon: "before the morning dawns I will torment<sup>21</sup> you for this injury."

16 changeling ['tʃeɪndʒlɪŋ] (n.) 調包小孩 (傳說仙神調包後的小孩)

17 courtier ['kɔːrtɪr] (n.) 朝臣

18 forswear [fɔːr'sweər] (v.) 放棄；戒絕

19 tarry ['tæri] (v.) 逗留；停留

20 page [peɪdʒ] (n.) 僮僕

21 torment ['tɔːrment] (v.) 折磨



THE QUARREL OF OBERON AND TITANIA