



## Scene 1

(**Theseus** and **Hippolyta**, along with their **servants**, enter Theseus's palace in Athens.)

**THESEUS:** Now, fair Hippolyta, our wedding  
hour draws near. Four more days!  
Time seems to go so slowly.

**HIPPOLYTA:** Four days will quickly become night.  
Four nights will dream away the time.  
And then the new moon, like a silver bow,  
Shall look on our wedding night.

**THESEUS:** Go, Philostrate.  
Stir up the youth of Athens to be merry.  
Awaken the spirit of fun.  
Tell all sadness to go to funerals.  
We don't want any sad faces at our  
wedding. (*Philostrate exits.*)  
Hippolyta, I wooed you with my sword  
In the heat of battle, and won your love  
while defeating you.  
But I will wed you in a different way—  
With celebration, joy, and good times.

(**Egeus** and his daughter **Hermia** enter, along with  
**Lysander** and **Demetrius**.)

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**EGEUS:** Joy to Theseus, our respected Duke!

**THESEUS:** Thank you, good Egeus.

What's the news with you?

**EGEUS:** I am having trouble with my child,  
My daughter Hermia.

This man, Demetrius, has my consent to  
marry her.

But you, Lysander, have cast a spell on her!

*(turning to Lysander)* You have given her  
poetry and exchanged tokens of love with  
my child;

You have sung insincere songs of love by  
her window in the moonlight.

You have given her rings, flowers, and candy.

You have used all the tricks young men use  
On young girls like my daughter.

You have stolen my daughter's heart

And made her disobedient to me.

Now she refuses to marry Demetrius.

I claim my ancient right as a father:

As she is mine, I may give her to the man

I choose or send her to her death.

This is the law of our land, as you know.





**THESEUS:** What do you say, Hermia?

Let me remind you, fair maid,  
Your father should be as a god to you.  
He is the one who formed your beauty.  
To him, you are but as a form in wax  
That he has shaped. It is within his rights  
To leave the form as it is or destroy it.  
Demetrius is a good man.

**HERMIA:** So is Lysander.

**THESEUS:** In himself he is. But, in this case,  
Because of your father's wishes,  
The other must be seen as the better man.

**HERMIA:** I wish my father saw it with my eyes.

**THESEUS:** Rather, you must see it his way.

**HERMIA:** I beg your grace to pardon me.

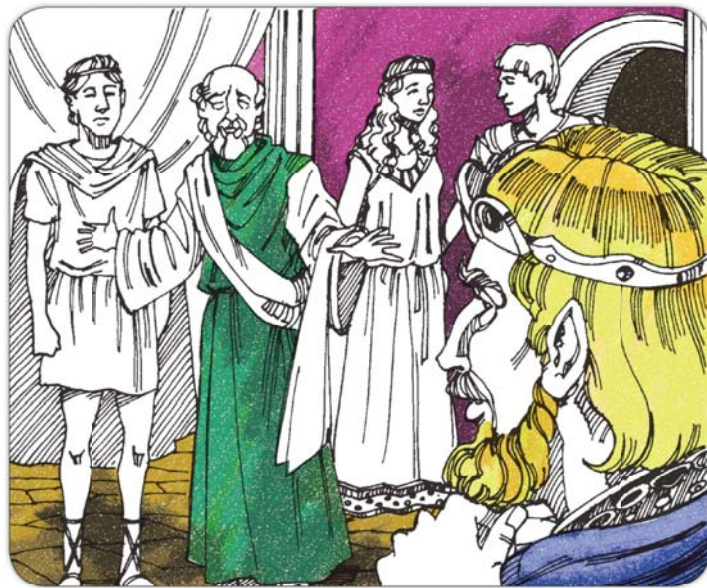
I do not know if it is proper for me  
To explain my thoughts to you.  
But I beg you to answer one question:  
What is the worst that could happen to me  
If I refuse to wed Demetrius?

**THESEUS:** Either to die or never to marry at all.  
Think hard, fair Hermia!

Consider your youth and your feelings.  
Ask yourself if you could live as a nun.  
Could you be a childless sister all your life,  
Singing weak songs to the cold, lifeless moon?  
Those who can do so are certainly blessed.  
But would you be happy with such a life?

**HERMIA:** So will I live—or die—my lord,  
Before I would marry a man I do not love.

**THESEUS:** Take time to think about this.  
Tell us your answer in four days,





On the wedding day of my love and me.  
By then you must prepare to die  
For going against your father's will—  
Or wed Demetrius, as your father wishes.  
Or live as a nun for the rest of your life.

**DEMETRIUS:** Give in, sweet Hermia.

And you, too, Lysander.

Let me claim what is rightly mine.

**LYSANDER:** You have her father's love, Demetrius.

Let me have Hermia's. *You* marry him.

**EGEUS:** It is true—Demetrius has my love.

And so, I shall give him what is mine.

Hermia belongs to me. All my rights to her

I give to Demetrius.

**LYSANDER:** My lord, I am as good a man as he!

My family is as well-connected as his.

I have as much money as he.

My love is greater than his.

In every way, I am at least as good as he is,

And in some ways, I am better.

The beautiful Hermia loves me,

Which is the most important point.