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The Lovers in Midsummer

freely adapted as a one-act play

by **LUELLA E. McMAHON**

from

William Shakespeare's

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE LOVERS IN MIDSUMMER)

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THE LOVERS IN MIDSUMMER

A Play in One Act

For Five Men and Four Women
(or a variation)

CHARACTERS

- HERMIA a small, dark girl,
in love with Lysander
- FELICIA Hermia's maid from her
childhood; middle-aged
and outspoken
- LYSANDER a young man of Athens
in love with Hermia
- EGEUS father of Hermia
- THESEUS Duke of Athens
- DEMETRIUS a young man of Athens
also in love with Hermia
- HELENA a tall, blonde girl,
in love with Demetrius
- TITANIA Queen of the Fairies
(part may be played as
King Oberon, as in original)
- PUCK a small, roguish elf
(boy or girl)
- PLACE: *Patio of Egeus' Home and
A Wood near Athens*
- TIME: *Ancient Athens*

NOTE:

It is suggested that the actors avoid the more formal--and dated--practice of declaiming Shakespeare as if reading a song, as read, for example, by Sir John Gielgud, and adopt instead the conversational tone, with natural pauses, such as made familiar by Richard Burton.

Scene 1

SCENE: The patio outside Egeus' home in Athens.
At rise of curtain HERMIA, a petite brunette, is seated on a bench in the patio, humming a love song and busily engaged in completing a bracelet braided of her hair. The tress of hair she is braiding is held in place by a bow the color of her dress. After a beat of two, FELICIA, a middle-aged maid, enters UL and hurries across to her, puffing.)

HERMIA (glancing up and speaking affectionately but eagerly).

My good Felicia,
Didst give my message to Lysander?

FELICIA (with the familiarity associated with long service).

Your good Felicia! 'Twill be poor Felicia!
Felicia who was turned out in the streets!
Once Egeus learns I have been messenger
Betwixt you and Lysander!
(Removes her light shawl, folding it testily.)

HERMIA.

Felicia, you have been my faithful nurse
since childhood
And I hold you very dear
But these be modern days and modern
ways.
Didst find Lysander?

FELICIA (laying folded shawl on bench and sitting on it). I did indeed. He comes apace. Modern days, hah! (Takes hold of braid.) What folly have we here?

HERMIA (resuming her work). 'Tis a love-token for Lysander.

FELICIA. Love token! Fol do rol!

HERMIA (ignoring her mood). I pray you hold it whilst I tie the bow. (FELICIA ties the ends to make it a bracelet. She holds it up admiringly and speaks sentimentally). For him!

FELICIA (disapproving). Soon you'll be daft as lovesick Helena!

HERMIA. Helena is my friend, so mock her not.

FELICIA.

Helena has no proper female pride.
She fawns upon Demetrius like spaniel
on its master.

In olden days the woman held the chase,
The man was the pursuer!

HERMIA (smugly). Her love for him is as undying as is my own for sweet Lysander.

FELICIA. Your father hath commanded you to wed Demetrius, who loves you as we all do.

HERMIA (petulantly). But I don't want his love.

FELICIA. In olden days children obeyed their parents.

HERMIA. And so do I. I love my father dearly. But I can't give my heart at his command. (Anxiously.) Art sure that Father will be gone all day?

FELICIA. He told me so.

HERMIA (rising and pirouetting happily). Good! Then my love and I can dream the happy hours away!

(HERMIA whirls into a dance step, her

cheek resting on her hands. On the word "love" LYSANDER enters UL. He strides across the patio and captures the delighted HERMIA in his arms. They embrace briefly. LYSANDER wears a sword. He carries a bracelet, similar to hers, made of his own hair.)

LYSANDER (ecstatic). My Hermia!

HERMIA (rapturous). Lysander! (They embrace briefly.)

LYSANDER (slipping the bracelet on her arm). A pledge of my true love!

HERMIA (seemingly surprised). A bracelet made of my Lysander's hair! (Holds up arm, comparing braid with his hair.) I'll treasure still, when old and bent with care! And for my pledge take this. (Puts her bracelet on his arm. LYSANDER captures and kisses her hand, with murmured thanks.)

FELICIA (disgusted with the sentimentality).
Humph! (She goes out L.)

(As Felicia goes out, EGEUS, THESEUS and DEMETRIUS enter UL. Their mood is stormy, as if they were soldiers going into battle. EGEUS may carry a cane which he uses to emphasize his gestures. EGEUS is about to speak, hears LYSANDER and HERMIA talking. He motions the others to be silent, and they stand listening, EGEUS with his hand cupped. DEMETRIUS wears a sword.)

LYSANDER (one arm encircling HERMIA, holding out the other to admire the bracelet).

By these love tokens be we always true!

HERMIA (kissing her bracelet). Nor shade of doubt-
ing fall between us two!

LYSANDER. Swear you'll be ever true--e'en though
your father loves Demetrius----

HERMIA (taking his hand). My good Lysander!
(Gazes tenderly into his eyes.)

I swear to you by Cupid's strongest bow,
By all the vows that ever men have broke,
(Smiles teasingly.)

In number more than women ever spoke--
That I love you and hate Demetrius!

(They embrace again, looking tenderly
into each other's eyes. EGEUS and DE-
METRIUS seethe. THESEUS smiles
slightly.)

EGEUS (turning to THESEUS). Thou seest, my Lord,
why I did beg of thee to come here unan-
nounced and why I lodge with you complaint
against my child, my daughter Hermia----

THESEUS (interrupting). It is unseemly that we stand
here thus. Let us approach them. (EGEUS
moves forward. LYSANDER and HERMIA
jump apart.)

HERMIA (startled). Father! I thought----

EGEUS. You thought I would be absent for the day!

I wished it thus, and thus misled your maid.

LYSANDER (crossing to EGEUS defiantly). But--sir----

EGEUS. But me no buts! Stand back!

LYSANDER. Sir, I demand----

HERMIA (coming to LYSANDER). Please, love, for
my sake----

LYSANDER. At your command----(They go upstage,
EGEUS motions THESEUS and DEMETRIUS
to move forward. They do.)

EGEUS. My noble lord, this man hath my consent to
marry her. (He motions DEMETRIUS

upstage.) Stand forth, Lysander! (LYSANDER comes down angrily, still wearing the bracelet.)

EGEUS (to THESEUS).

And, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of
my child.

(Turns angrily on LYSANDER.)

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given
her rhymes
And interchanged love-tokens with my
child.

(He notices the bracelet and with a quick, unexpected snatch removes it from Lysander's wrist and throws it to the floor. HERMIA hurriedly wraps her kerchief around her bracelet. LYSANDER rapidly retrieves the braid and threatens DEMETRIUS, who has started forward to get it.)

EGEUS (again addressing THESEUS).

And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your
grace

Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
Which shall be either to Demetrius,
Or to her death, according to our law.

THESEUS (summoning HERMIA downstage).

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair
maid,

To you your father should be as a god;
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA (determinedly). So is Lysander.

THESEUS.

In himself he is;

But, in this case, wanting your father's