



Taming of the Shrew



THE STORY

Baptista, a rich gentleman of Padua, has two daughters. The elder, Katherina, an intelligent, outspoken woman, is thought to be a shrew by the townsfolk. What Katherina really resents is the preferential attention paid to her silly, vain sister, Bianca, by not only a series of suitors, but her own father. Despite her objections, Katherina is married to Petruchio. Petruchio marries Katherina for her money and sets out to trick and bully her into submission. But who tames whom, the spectator must decide.

ACT I, Scene 1: Outside Baptista's house

Three suitors – the cockscorn Hortensio, the silly student Lucentio and the old roué Gremio – arrive to serenade Baptista's pretty, younger daughter, Bianca. Wrapped in large cloaks, each presents her with a token of his love. Gremio gives her a fan, Hortensio a glove and Lucentio a rose. Bianca's older sister, Katherina, interrupts the idyllic scene. Baptista shoos the suitors away, declaring that Bianca shall not marry until Katherina is wed. The ruckus awakens a crowd of neighbors whom the quick-tempered Katherina sends packing.

Scene 2: A tavern

The three thwarted suitors nurse their scars from their encounter with Baptista in a local tavern. Petruchio, a gentleman of more generosity than means, arrives very tipsy and is stripped of his last penny by two prostitutes. The three suitors offer to introduce Petruchio to a rich young woman to save him from his plight.

Scene 3: Baptista's house

Bianca admires the gifts presented by her suitors, her favorite being Lucentio's rose. Her reverie is interrupted by Katherina's jealous and impatient nastiness. Baptista separates his quarrelling daughters. Petruchio then arrives at Baptista's house and asks for Katherina's hand in marriage, sight unseen! After a stormy and tempestuous first meeting, reminiscent of a wrestling match, Kate grudgingly agrees to marry Petruchio. Never has a man brought her to such a state of anger, frustration and piqued curiosity. Baptista is exultant.

Scene 4: A street

All the neighbors gather in the street, making their way to Katherina's wedding. They think it all a huge joke. Bianca's suitors gleefully join them in a playful, silly dance.

Scene 5: Baptista's house

Katherina is dragged to her wedding kicking and screaming by her father. Petruchio arrives late for his wedding and behaves outrageously; Katherina is definitely not impressed and won't give in. After the ceremony, Petruchio carries his bride off without waiting for the feast that has been prepared by Baptista.

ACT II, Scene 1: A country road

The newlyweds, Katherina and Petruchio travel by horse through a torrential storm toward Petruchio's house.

Scene 2: Petruchio's kitchen

Katherina arrives in her new home hungry, cold and soaked to the skin. Petruchio prevents her from eating under the pretext that the food is not good enough for her and prevents her from warming herself before the fire by smothering it with water. In retaliation, Katherina refuses to go to bed with Petruchio and spends a hard, cold night on the kitchen hearth.

Scene 3: A carnival

Lucentio bribes two prostitutes to wear cloaks and masks similar to those worn by Bianca. He also distributes a fan, a glove and a rose to each of the three women. He is thus able to trick his two rivals, Gremio and Hortensio, into marrying the prostitutes, while he is left with his beloved Bianca.

Scene 4: Petruchio's house

Still cold and starving, Katherina is at her wit's end with Petruchio, but they finally wear each other down. Katherina becomes almost puppet-like in Petruchio's arms. Katherina eventually capitulates. Exhausted and repentant, the two finally admit that they love each other. Petruchio treats Katherina to a giant feast, which she devours.

Scene 5: A country road

Travelling back for Bianca's wedding on a warm, sunny day, Petruchio indulges in some more whims, but now Katherina has learnt how to humor him.

Scene 6: Bianca's wedding

Bianca and the brides of Gremio and Hortensio treat their husbands disdainfully. It is now a transformed, sweet and docile Katherina who shows them how a wife is expected to behave. Left alone, Katherina and Petruchio revel in their new-found love, respect and equality.