

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
By William Shakespeare

ACT 3, SCENE 2

HELENA

These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er?

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS

waking up

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

HELENA

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
To vow and swear and superpraise my parts,
When, I am sure, you hate me with your hearts.

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so,
For you love Hermia; this you know I know.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia. I will none.
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.

HERMIA

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide.
Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think. It cannot be.

HELENA

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.—
Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid,
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows—O, is all forgot?
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?

HERMIA

I am amazèd at your words.
I scorn you not. It seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

Ay, do. Persever, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back,
Wink each at other, hold the sweet jest up.

LYSANDER

Helen, I love thee. By my life, I do.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

HERMIA

Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me.
Why, then, you left me—O, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER Ay, by my life,
And never did desire to see thee more.
Be certain, nothing truer, 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena. *Hermia turns him loose*

HERMIA
O me! You juggler, you cankerblossom,
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA
Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA
"Puppet"? Why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak!
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you—
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
He followed you; for love, I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me;
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back.

LYSANDER
Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS
No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

HELENA O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!

She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA 'Little' again! nothing but 'low' and 'little'!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

LYSANDER
Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

DEMETRIUS Let her alone: speak not of Helena;

LYSANDER Now she holds me not;
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS exit

HERMIA You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:
Nay, go not back.

HELENA I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away.

HELENA exits

HERMIA I am amazed, and know not what to say.

HERMIA exits