

## ACT III, SCENE 2

Another part of the woods.

[Enter OBERON, King of the Fairies]

OBERON I wonder if Titania be awaked;  
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,  
Which she must dote on in extremity.  
[Enter PUCK]  
Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit?  
What night-rule now about this haunted grove? 5

PUCK My mistress with a monster is in love.  
Near to her close and consecrated bower,  
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,  
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,  
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10  
Were met together to rehearse a play  
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.  
The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort  
Who Pyramus presented in their sport, 15  
Forsook his scene and entered in a brake,  
When I did him at this advantage take:  
An ass's nole I fixed on his head.  
Anon, his Thisby must be answered,  
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy— 20  
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky—  
So at his sight away his fellows fly, 25  
And at our stamp here, o'er and o'er one falls;  
He 'Murder!' cries, and help from Athens calls.  
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears, thus strong,  
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong,  
For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch, 30  
Some sleeves, some hats; from yielders all things catch.  
I led them on in this distracted fear,  
And left sweet Pyramus translated there;  
When in that moment, so it came to pass,  
Titania waked, and straightway loved an ass.

## ACT III, SCENE 2

In another part of the forest outside of Athens.

[OBERON, King of the Fairies, enters.]

OBERON I wonder if Titania is awake. Whatever she first sees, she  
will fall madly in love with. [PUCK arrives.] Here comes  
my messenger. How are you, spirit? What night fun will  
take place in the woods?

PUCK Titania is in love with a monster. Near her secret quarters,  
while she was asleep, a bunch of clowns, ignorant labor-  
ers that earn their living in Athenian shops, gathered to  
practice a play to honor Theseus's wedding to Hippolyta.  
The densest one of the players acts the part of Pyramus.  
He left the stage and entered a grove, where I found  
him. I put a donkey's head on his head. Soon, Pyramus  
will return to say his lines to Thisby. When the workers  
see Bottom, they will run away like wild geese or red-  
headed jackdaws flapping away into the sky at the sound  
of the hunter's gun. And at our tread, one by one, the  
men will fall. Bottom will cry "Murder!" and yell to  
Athens for protection. Thus weakened by fear, the play-  
ers will sink into confusion. Briars and stickers will grab at  
their sleeves and hats, and will seize the weaklings. I cre-  
ated this terror. I left Pyramus on this spot. In that  
instant, Titania happened to arise and fall in love with a  
donkey.

**OBERON** This falls out better than I could devise. 35  
But hast thou yet latched the Athenian's eyes  
With the love juice, as I did bid thee do?

**PUCK** I took him sleeping—that is finished too—  
And the Athenian woman by his side.  
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed. 40  
*[Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA]*

**OBERON** Stand close; this is the same Athenian.

**PUCK** This is the woman, but not this the man.

**DEMETRIUS** O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?  
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

**HERMIA** Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse, 45  
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.  
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,  
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,  
And kill me too.  
The sun was not so true unto the day 50  
As he to me: would he have stol'n away  
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon  
This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon  
May through the centre creep and so displease  
Her brother's noontide with th' Antipodes. 55  
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.  
So should a murderer look: so dead, so grim.

**DEMETRIUS** So should the murdered look, and so should I,  
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty;  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60  
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

**HERMIA** What's this to my Lysander? Where is he?  
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

**DEMETRIUS** I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

**HERMIA** Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds 65  
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?  
Henceforth be never numbered among men!  
Oh, once tell true; tell true, even for my sake:  
Durst thou have looked upon him being awake?  
And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch! 70  
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?  
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

**OBERON** This is even better than I had hoped. Have you also  
anointed the eyelids of the Athenian as I commanded?

**PUCK** I found him asleep. I did what you said. The Athenian  
immediately fell in love with the first woman he saw.  
*[DEMETRIUS and HERMIA enter.]*

**OBERON** Stay here. This is the Athenian.

**PUCK** This is the woman, but not the man I anointed.

**DEMETRIUS** How can you reject a man who truly loves you? How can  
you utter bitter words on him like an enemy.

**HERMIA** I am only scolding, but I could do something worse. You  
give me good reason to swear. If you murdered Lysander  
in his sleep, you are already soaked in blood, so kill me  
too. He is more faithful to me than the sun is to daylight.  
Would Lysander have crept away from me? I would  
sooner believe that the moon could sneak through a hole  
in the earth and interrupt noon on the opposite side of  
the world. I believe you murdered him. A killer would  
look as emotionless and evil as you.

**DEMETRIUS** I look just like a killer because you wound my heart. But  
you still look as gorgeous as Venus in the sky.

**HERMIA** What does this have to do with Lysander? Where is he?  
Please, Demetrius, show me where he is.

**DEMETRIUS** I would rather feed his carcass to my dogs.

**HERMIA** Away with you, stray hound! You force me beyond a  
woman's patience. Did you kill him? May you never be  
called a man! Tell me the truth, for my sake. Did you see  
him after he awoke? Did you kill him while he slept? Oh,  
that was brave of you! Wouldn't a snake or serpent do  
the same? A snake did do it. No serpent could have a  
more deceptive tongue than yours.

DEMETRIUS	You spend your passion on a misprised mood: I am not guilty of Lysander's blood, Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.	75
HERMIA	I pray thee, tell me, then, that he is well.	
DEMETRIUS	And if I could, what should I get therefore?	
HERMIA	A privilege never to see me more. And from thy hated presence part I so. See me no more, whether he be dead or no. <i>[Exit]</i>	80
DEMETRIUS	There is no following her in this fierce vein: Here, therefore, for a while I will remain. So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe; Which now in some slight measure it will pay, If for his tender here I make some stay. <i>[Lies down]</i>	85
OBERON	What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite, And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight: Of thy misprision must perforce ensue Some true love turned, and not a false turned true.	90
PUCK	Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth, A million fail, confounding oath on oath.	
OBERON	About the wood go, swifter than the wind, And Helena of Athens look thou find. All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer, With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear. By some illusion see thou bring her here; I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.	95
PUCK	I go, I go; look how I go, Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow! <i>[Exit]</i>	100

DEMETRIUS	You waste your anger on a faulty impression. I didn't kill Lysander. For all I know, he is still alive.
HERMIA	Oh please tell me that he is not hurt.
DEMETRIUS	What would you give me if I could reassure you?
HERMIA	I would reward you by going away. I would never see you again. Whatever the outcome, I will leave your sight. <i>[She departs.]</i>
DEMETRIUS	There is no reason to follow her when she is so mad. I will stay here for a while. My sadness will increase until I get some sleep. I will feel better if I stay here and rest. <i>[DEMETRIUS lies down.]</i>
OBERON	Puck, what have you done? You put the magic pansy juice on the wrong person. Because of your error, you ruined true love and produced a false affection.
PUCK	Fate rules everything. Only one man in a million keeps his promise to a lover.
OBERON	Hurry like the wind through the woods. Locate Helena of Athens. She is lovesick and pale. Her loving sighs steal away her color. Use magic to bring her here. I will put a spell on Demetrius until she returns.
PUCK	I fly away swifter than a Turk's arrow! <i>[PUCK departs.]</i>

OBERON	Flower of this purple dye, Hit with Cupid's archery, Sink in apple of his eye! <i>[He drops the juice on DEMETRIUS' eyelids]</i> When his love he doth espy, Let her shine as gloriously As the Venus of the sky. When thou wak'st, if she be by, Beg of her for remedy. <i>[Enter PUCK]</i>	105
PUCK	Captain of our fairy band, Helena is here at hand, And the youth mistook by me, Pleading for a lover's fee. Shall we their fond pageant see? Lord, what fools these mortals be!	110  115
OBERON	Stand aside. The noise they make Will cause Demetrius to awake.	
PUCK	Then will two at once woo one. That must needs be sport alone; And those things do best please me That befall prepost'rously. <i>[Enter LYSANDER and HELENA]</i>	120
LYSANDER	Why should you think that I should woo in scorn? Scorn and derision never come in tears. Look when I vow, I weep; and vows so born, In their nativity all truth appears. How can these things in me seem scorn to you, Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?	125
HELENA	You do advance your cunning more and more. When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray! These vows are Hermia's. Will you give her o'er? Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh: Your vows to her and me, put in two scales, Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.	130
LYSANDER	I had no judgment when to her I swore.	
HELENA	Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.	135
LYSANDER	Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.	

OBERON	Purple pansy that Cupid struck with an arrow, drop juice on Demetrius's eyelid! <i>[He drips the pansy juice on DEMETRIUS's eyelids.]</i> When he sees his love, let her look like Venus in the sky. When you awaken, Demetrius, if she is near, beg her pardon. <i>[PUCK returns.]</i>
PUCK	Oberon, captain of the fairies, Helena is coming. Demetrius, the man I misidentified, begs once more for her love. Shall we watch them reunite? Lord, humans are silly!
OBERON	Stand over there. Hermia will awaken Demetrius.
PUCK	They will soon be a couple again. This should be fun. I enjoy events caused by confusion. <i>[LYSANDER and HELENA enter.]</i>
LYSANDER	Why do you think I make fun of you? I would weep while I mock you. See, I weep when I pledge my love. Promises spoken with tears are true. Why do my words seem deceptive when they come with tears?
HELENA	You become sneakier. When you court me like you courted Hermia, you commit a devilish sin! You said these words to Hermia. Are you giving her up? Your two vows—to me and to her—are worthless. Place your pledges on a scale. They weigh the same as lies.
LYSANDER	I was wrong when I courted her.
HELENA	You are wrong to give her up.
LYSANDER	Demetrius loves Hermia. He doesn't love you.

**DEMETRIUS** *[Waking]* O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!  
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?  
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show  
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! 140  
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,  
Fanned with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss  
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

**HELENA** O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent 145  
To set against me for your merriment.  
If you were civil, and knew courtesy,  
You would not do me thus much injury.  
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,  
But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150  
If you were men, as men you are in show,  
You would not use a gentle lady so,  
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.  
You both are rivals, and love Hermia; 155  
And now both rivals, to mock Helena.  
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
With your derision! None of noble sort  
Would so offend a virgin, and extort 160  
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

**LYSANDER** You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so.  
For you love Hermia: this you know I know.  
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,  
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part; 165  
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,  
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

**HELENA** Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

**DEMETRIUS** Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none.  
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170  
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourned;  
And now to Helen is it home returned,  
There to remain.

**LYSANDER** Helen, it is not so.

**DEMETRIUS** Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,  
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear. 175  
Look where thy love comes: yonder is thy dear.  
*[Enter HERMIA]*

ORIGINAL

**DEMETRIUS** *[DEMETRIUS awakens.]* Oh Helena, goddess, elf, perfect  
and sacred woman! What compares to your eyes? Crystal  
looks like mud. Your lips tempt me like ripe cherries. The  
windblown snow of the Turkish mountains looks black  
when placed alongside your hand. Let me kiss this pure  
princess, my joy!

**HELENA** Oh meanness! Oh hell! You are all plotting to make a  
joke of me. If you had manners, you wouldn't mistreat  
me this way. Can't you just hate me without plotting to  
laugh at me too? If you were gentlemen, as you appear  
to be, you wouldn't mistreat a lady. You court and  
pledge and overpraise me when I know you despise me.  
Both of you love Hermia. You both ridicule me. This is no  
gentlemanly prank, to make a girl cry. No nobleman  
would insult a girl and try her patience for fun.

**LYSANDER** Don't be mean, Demetrius. I know you love Hermia. I  
heartily give up Hermia to you. Give me Helena, whom I  
will love until I die.

**HELENA** Never have tricksters wasted more words.

**DEMETRIUS** Lysander, you keep Hermia. I don't want her. Even if I did  
love her, that love has ended. My affection was only tem-  
porary. I have returned to Helena and will never part  
from her.

**LYSANDER** Helena, say it isn't so.

**DEMETRIUS** Don't ridicule a loyalty you know nothing about. You  
may pay a terrible price. Look, your girlfriend is coming.  
There she is. *[HERMIA enters.]*

TRANSLATION

**HERMIA** Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;  
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
It pays the hearing double recompense: 180  
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? 185

**LYSANDER** Lysander's love, that would not let him bide:  
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night  
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.  
Why seek'st thou me? Could not this make thee know  
The hate I bare thee made me leave thee so? 190

**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, 195  
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived,  
To bait me with this foul derision?  
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,  
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,  
When we have chid the hasty-footed time 200  
For parting us,—O, is all forgot?  
All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?  
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,  
Have with our needles created both one flower,  
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion, 205  
Both warbling of one song, both in one key;  
As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds  
Had been incorporate. So we grew together,  
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted;  
But yet an union in partition, 210  
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;  
So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;  
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,  
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.  
And will you rent our ancient love asunder, 215  
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?  
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:  
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,  
Though I alone do feel the injury.

**HERMIA** I hear better in the dark than I see. Although I can't see, I  
hear Lysander twice as well. Although I can't see  
Lysander, I hear you. Why did you abandon me?

**LYSANDER** Why should I stay with you when I love someone else?

**HERMIA** What affection takes you away from me?

**LYSANDER** My love for someone else would not let me stay. Helena  
shines brighter in the night than stars. Why do you pur-  
sue me? Don't you realize that I hate you?

**HERMIA** You don't mean it. It can't be.

**HELENA** Aha, Hermia is part of this mockery! All three join in  
making fun of me. Wicked Hermia! Disloyal girl, have  
you plotted with them to torment me for fun? Have you  
forgotten how we shared secrets like sisters, how we  
regretted having to end our time together? Have you  
forgotten our childhood friendship, our girlish ways? We  
sat on one pillow and embroidered a flower on our  
needlework while singing the same song. We worked as  
though our hands, bodies, voices, and thoughts were one  
person. We grew together like a double cherry. We were  
like two cherries on one stem. We were two bodies with  
one heart. Like coats of arms, which crown a couple as  
one family. Will you destroy our friendship by joining  
Lysander and Demetrius in jeering at me? Your behavior  
is cruel, unladylike. All women will scold you for the cru-  
elty I suffer.

**HERMIA** I am amazed at your passionate words: 220  
I scorn you not; it seems that you scorn me.

**HELENA** Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,  
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face?  
And made your other love, Demetrius,  
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot, 225  
To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,  
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this  
To her he hates? And wherefore doth Lysander  
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,  
And tender me, forsooth, affection, 230  
But by your setting on, by your consent?  
What though I be not so in grace as you,  
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,  
But miserable most, to love unloved:  
This you should pity rather than despise. 235

**HERMIA** I understand not what you mean by this.

**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.  
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240  
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,  
You would not make me such an argument.  
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault;  
Which death, or absence, soon shall remedy.

**LYSANDER** Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse; 245  
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

**HELENA** O excellent!

**HERMIA** *[To LYSANDER]* Sweet, do not scorn her so.

**DEMETRIUS** *[To LYSANDER]* If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

**LYSANDER** Thou canst compel no more than she entreat;  
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers. 250  
Helen, I love thee; by my life I do.  
I swear by that which I will lose for thee  
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

**DEMETRIUS** *[To HELENA]* I say I love thee more than he can do.

**LYSANDER** If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too. 255

**HERMIA** I am bewildered by your charge. I am not laughing at  
you. You are mocking me.

**HELENA** Didn't you send Lysander to pursue and court me?  
to compliment my eyes and face? Didn't you send  
Demetrius, who once abandoned me, to call me goddess,  
elf, perfect and precious, heavenly woman? Why would  
he say that to someone he hates? Why would Lysander  
abandon you, whom he cherished in his soul? Why would  
he offer me his love unless you told him to do it? Even  
though I am not so pretty, beloved, and lucky, why  
should I be made miserable? You should feel sorry for me  
rather than despise me.

**HERMIA** I don't understand any of this.

**HELENA** Yes, you do. Go on, pretend to be sorry for me. Smirk at  
me behind my back. Wink at each other and enjoy the  
joke. This game, so well played, will make history. If you  
have any sympathy, generosity, or courtesy, you would  
stop teasing me. Goodbye. It is partly my fault. I will end  
this game by dying or leaving you.

**LYSANDER** Don't go, Helena. Hear my reason. You are my love, my  
life, my spirit, beautiful Helena!

**HELENA** Not again!

**HERMIA** *[HERMIA to LYSANDER]* Sweetheart, don't ridicule Helena.

**DEMETRIUS** *[DEMETRIUS to LYSANDER]* If Hermia can't entice you to  
stop, I'll make you stop hounding Helena.

**LYSANDER** You can't force me any more than she can beg me to  
stop. Your threats are no stronger than her pleas. I love  
you, Helena. I swear on my life. I swear by the loss of you  
to anybody who proves me a liar.

**DEMETRIUS** *[DEMETRIUS to HELENA]* I love you more than Lysander  
does.

**LYSANDER** If you think that, step aside and prove it.

DEMETRIUS Quick, come—

HERMIA Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER Away, you Ethiopel!

DEMETRIUS No, no, sir,  
Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow,  
But yet come not. You are a tame man, go.

LYSANDER Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose, 260  
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

HERMIA Why are you grown so rude? What change is this,  
Sweet love?

LYSANDER Thy love! Out, tawny Tartar, out!  
Out, loathed medicine! O hated potion, hence!

HERMIA Do you not jest?

HELENA Yes, sooth; and so do you. 265

LYSANDER Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS I would I had your bond; for I perceive  
A weak bond holds you; I'll not trust your word.

LYSANDER What! Should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?  
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

HERMIA What! Can you do me greater harm than hate?  
Hate me? Wherefore? O me! What news, my love?  
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?  
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.  
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me: 275  
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.  
Therefore be out of hope, of question, doubt,  
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest 280  
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA [To HELENA] 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?

DEMETRIUS Come fight me now.

HERMIA Lysander, what will a fight prove?

LYSANDER Away, you African woman!

DEMETRIUS No, Lysander, you pretend to part with Hermia. You pre-  
tend you want a fight, but you stay here. You are a cow-  
ard. Off with you.

LYSANDER Let go of me, you cat, you sticker! Let me go or I will  
yank you free like a snake.

HERMIA Why have you changed? Sweetheart, what makes you so  
rude?

LYSANDER Your clinging to me! Go away, dark Turk, go! Away, bit-  
ter taste! Oh, hateful drink, go away!

HERMIA Are you teasing me?

HELENA Yes, he is, and you are teasing me.

LYSANDER Demetrius, I will keep my promise to fight you.

DEMETRIUS I wish I had your promise in writing. You pledge a weak  
vow. I can't trust your word.

LYSANDER Should I harm Hermia, hit her, kill her to prove myself  
honest? Although I hate her, I won't harm her just to  
prove my point.

HERMIA What worse harm can you do to me than to hate me?  
Why do you hate me? Oh, no! What has changed, my  
love? Aren't I Hermia? Are you still Lysander? I look the  
same as I did yesterday. You loved me last night. You left  
me during the night. Why, god forbid, did you reject me?

LYSANDER I vow on my life that I abandoned you. I don't ever want  
to see you again. So, accept my desertion as unquestio-  
nable, certain, sure. It is no joke that I hate you and love  
Helena.

HERMIA [HERMIA to HELENA] Oh, you fraud! You cankerworm!  
You man-stealer! Why did you come in the night and  
steal away Lysander's heart?



HELENA	Fine, i' faith! Have you no modesty, no maiden shame, No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear Impatient answers from my gentle tongue? Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!	285
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.	290 295
HELENA	I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen, Let her not hurt me. I was never curst; I have no gift at all in shrewishness. I am a right maid for my cowardice; Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think, Because she is something lower than myself, That I can match her.	300
HERMIA	Lower? Hark, again.	305
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 threatened me To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too. And now, so you will let me quiet go, To Athens will I bear my folly back, And follow you no farther. Let me go. You see how simple and how fond I am.	310 315
HERMIA	Why, get you gone! Who is't that hinders you?	
HELENA	A foolish heart that I leave here behind.	
HERMIA	What! with Lysander?	
HELENA	With Demetrius.	320

HELENA	Stop! Have you no modesty, no female pride, no restraint? Do you want to yank retorts from my mouth? Shame on you, you two-faced dolly!
HERMIA	Dolly? Why do you call me that? Oh, so you want to call names! You ridicule me for being short? You boast of being taller? You won Lysander because you are taller than I. Have you grown in his admiration because I am lowly and shrunken? How low do you think I am, you painted flagpole? Tell me! How short am I by compari- son? I am not too short to reach up and scratch your eyes out.
HELENA	Even though you men ridicule me, don't let Hermia hurt me. I am not scrappy. I am not good at arguing. Like a proper girl, I avoid fights. Don't let her hit me. You may think that, because she is shorter, I would win the fight.
HERMIA	Shorter? Again she makes fun of me.
HELENA	Hermia, don't be so bitter toward me. I always loved you, Hermia. I always kept your secrets and never harmed you. Except, I told Demetrius that you were eloping to the woods with Lysander. He followed you. Because I love him, I followed Demetrius. But he has scolded me, threat- ened to hit me, to reject me, even to kill me. Let me go quietly. I will return to Athens and follow you no more. Let me leave. You see how simple-minded and silly I am.
HERMIA	Then go! What stops you?
HELENA	A foolish heart that I leave here.
HERMIA	Do you leave it with Lysander?
HELENA	I leave it with Demetrius.

**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. 325

**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 hind'ring knot-grass made,  
You bead, you acorn.

**DEMETRIUS** You are too officious 330  
In her behalf that scorns your services.  
Let her alone: speak not of Helena,  
Take not her part; for if thou dost intend  
Never so little show of love to her,  
Thou shalt aby it.

**LYSANDER** Now she holds me not; 335  
Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,  
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

**DEMETRIUS** Follow? Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.  
*[Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS]*

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

**HELENA** I will not trust you, I; 340  
Nor longer stay in your curst company.  
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray;  
My legs are longer though, to run away.  
*[Exit]*

**HERMIA** I am amazed, and know not what to say.  
*[Exit]*  
*[OBERON and PUCK come forward]*

**OBERON** This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,  
Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully. 345

**LYSANDER** Don't worry. Hermia won't harm you, Helena.

**DEMETRIUS** No, she won't, even though Lysander defends her.

**HELENA** When Hermia's mad, she is sharp and shrewd. She was a schemer when she was in school. She may be short, but she's vicious.

**HERMIA** You call me short! You keep calling me low and short!  
Why do you men let her insult me like this? Let me fight her.

**LYSANDER** Go away, shortie. You tiny grass-eater, you bead, you acorn.

**DEMETRIUS** You butt in and take the part of a woman who scorns you. Leave Hermia alone. Don't mention Helena's name. Don't defend her. If you don't love Hermia, you will pay for your intrusion.

**LYSANDER** Hermia has no hold on me. Come fight me, if you dare, to see who deserves Helena.

**DEMETRIUS** Follow you? No, I will accompany you, side by side.  
*[LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS depart.]*

**HERMIA** All this arguing is your fault, Helena. Don't sneak away now.

**HELENA** I don't trust you. I won't stay with you. You are more eager to fight than I am. My legs are longer than yours for running. *[HELENA departs.]*

**HERMIA** I am stunned. I don't know what to say. *[HERMIA departs.]* *[OBERON and PUCK enter.]*

**OBERON** Your carelessness caused this. You are always making errors, or else creating mischief.