

**HELENA – A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
(SCENE 1, ACT 1)**

“Ay, me!... The course of true love never did run smooth.”

Helena has always been wooed and fallen in love with a fair youth of Athens named Demetrius. Demetrius, however, has passed over Helena and has now settled his intentions on Hermia; and he has gained the consent of Hermia’s father to wed her. Hermia, however, has no interest in Demetrius for she is in love with another young Athenian youth, Lysander, who returns her love. The more Helena loves Demetrius, the more he hates her. The more Hermia hates Demetrius, the more he dotes on her. When the Duke of Athens, Theseus, sides with Hermia’s father and orders her to marry Demetrius, she and Lysander plan to elope.

Since Hermia and Helena have been close friends since childhood, the couple entrusts the news of their plan with her. Helena, while gentler than Hermia, is not altogether generous. She is in the maelstrom of unrequited love, and in this upheave she decides to tell Demetrius of the elopement. She hopes that by helping him pursue Hermia, she will win Demetrius back. The course of true love also never did run logical.

“Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves you fair. O happy fair!
Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue’s sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd’s ear
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.

Sickness is catching. O, were favor so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue’s sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,
The rest I’d give to be you translated.
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius’ heart.

Exit Lysander and Hermia

How happy some o’er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know.
And as he errs, doting on Hermia’s eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing’d Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love’s mind of any judgment taste;

Wings and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
And waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and show'rs of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
Then to the wood will he tomorrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight tither and back again."