

# **La Belle Dame sans Merci**

**For Flute, Harp, Mezzo-soprano, and Violin**



**Instrumentation**

Flute

Harp

Mezzo-soprano

Violin

**Duration**

Approx. 9 min. 30 sec.

## **La Belle Dame sans Merci**

John Keats (1795-1821)

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
Alone and palely loitering?  
The sedge has withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing!

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
So haggard and so woe-begone?  
The squirrel's granary is full,  
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,  
With anguish moist and fever-dew,  
And on thy cheeks a fading rose  
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful, a fairy's child;  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;  
She looked at me as she did love,  
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long,  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna-dew,  
And sure in language strange she said—  
'I love thee true'.

She took me to her Elfin grot,  
And there she wept and sighed full sore,  
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes  
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,  
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—  
The latest dream I ever dreamt  
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,

Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
They cried—‘La Belle Dame sans Merci  
Hath thee in thrall!’

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,  
With horrid warning gapèd wide,  
And I awoke and found me here,  
On the cold hill’s side.

And this is why I sojourn here,  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

## Poem summary (Source: <https://www.enotes.com/topics/la-belle-dame-sans-merci>)

The first three stanzas of “La Belle Dame sans Merci” pose the speaker’s questions to a melancholy knight who looks lonely, listless, and ill. The sedge, a grass-like plant that thrives in wetlands, has dried up, and the knight, as if in sympathy with this arid setting, appears depleted both physically and emotionally.

In stanza four, the knight begins to answer the speaker’s questions, reporting that he met a beautiful, fairylike lady in the meads (meadows). Enchanted by this beautiful figure, the knight describes her graceful movement, her alluring long hair, and her lively appearance, apparent in her wild eyes.

In stanza five, he makes a garland (a wreath of intertwined flowers) for her head and bracelets that enhance her natural perfume. She is responsive to his loving tribute, and her sweet moaning signals that she is falling in love with him. In stanza six, enraptured with his newfound love, the knight places her on his horse and follows her all day as she looks down at him and sings a fairy song, while in stanza seven she gathers and feeds him sweet roots and delectable foods to express her true love for him.

In stanza eight, the mood of the poem shifts back toward melancholy, when the knight relates how the woman took him to a grotto, a sort of magical space the knight associates with fairy creatures such as elves. In this setting, the delicate, fleeting nature of the lady’s feelings suddenly erupts with her tears, which the knight tries to soothe with his kisses that shut her “wild, wild eyes”—words that suggest he has fallen in love with a creature that he cannot possess.

It is the lady who lulls the knight to sleep, however. In stanzas nine to eleven, he is engulfed in a dream of kings and princes who are pale (as he is at the beginning of the poem) and who warn him that he has become enslaved by the beautiful lady without mercy. When he awakes, the knight finds himself on the cold hillside, feeling the deathlike cold of his dream and looking like the sad figure the speaker first encountered. Coming full circle in stanza twelve, the knight notes that his experience with the lady is why he remains in this bleak setting, alone and feeling that he has lost the love of this beautiful figure that haunts and blights not only his life but also the world in which he finds himself.

This deceptively simple tale written in a ballad style, featuring short lines and romantic longings, evokes the human yearning for an eternal, imperishable love, a bond that outlasts death and that conquers mortality. To lose the lady is tantamount to a kind of death for the knight. Thus, John Keats uses the medieval setting as a kind of allegory, a symbolic representation of what love represents. To the lover, the beloved is a fairy creature usually associated with perfection and with the desire to do good and to protect the loved one.

The knight is at the mercy of his love, meaning both the lady and the knight’s feelings for the lady. When she withdraws her love, she is portrayed as without mercy. The heat of passion vanishes, and this is why the knight feels cold and why the world itself seems frigid.

for Flute, Harp, Mezzo-soprano, and Viola

Mezzo soprano

[illegible]

13

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*arco*

*pizz.*

*p*

*pp*

O\_\_ what can\_\_ all thee,

The musical score consists of four staves:

- Fl.**: Flute part starting at measure 20. It features a melodic line with trills and triplets, ending with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking.
- Hp.**: Harp accompaniment. The left hand plays sustained chords (B $\flat$ , F $\sharp$ ) while the right hand provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*.
- M. S.**: Musician's Song vocal line. The lyrics are "knight - at-arms, A-lone and pale-ly loi-ter-ing? The sedge has with-". The melody includes several triplet markings and ends with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic.
- Vla.**: Viola part. It begins with an *arco* (arco) marking and features a melodic line with a *v* (vibrato) marking and a *pp* dynamic.





37

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

knight - - at arms, So hag-gard and so woe - be -

E $\flat$  B $\flat$  D $\sharp$  B $\flat$  A $\sharp$  E $\flat$  G $\flat$  E $\sharp$  B $\sharp$  A $\flat$  C $\sharp$  B $\flat$

41

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

gone? The squir-rel's gra - na - ry\_\_ is full,

*f* *mf* *mp*

E $\flat$  B $\flat$  F $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  E $\sharp$  B $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$

46

Fl.

*p* *pp* 3 3 3

Hp.

*p* *pp* A $\flat$  G $\sharp$  A $\natural$

M. S.

*p* *pp* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

And the har - vest's done. I saw a lil - y on thy\_

Vla.

ord. *pp* 3

52

Fl.

*p* *pp* 3 *p*

Hp.

*p* *pp* *p* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

A $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\natural$  C $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  E $\natural$  G $\natural$  A $\flat$  C $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  B $\flat$

M. S.

*p* *pp* 3 3 3 3 *p*

brow, With an - guish moist and fe - ver\_ dew,

Vla.

*p* *pp* 3 *p*

56

Fl.

*pp* *p* *mf*

Hp.

*pp* *mp* *mf*

F# D# A# Db C# Eb G# B# F# Gb

M. S.

And on thy cheeks a fading rose

Vla.

*pp* *p* *mf* *p*

60

Fl.

*p* *pp* *p*

Hp.

*p* *pp*

D# Db F# Bb G#

M. S.

Fast with - er - eth too.

Vla.

*p* *pp* *ord.* *p*

65

Fl.

*pp* *p* *mf*

Hp.

*p* *mf*

F# E# A# B# A# Bb Db C# D#  
C#

M. S.

Vla.

*pp* *p* *mf*

ord.

69

Fl.

*f*

Hp.

*f*

Db F# Eb Ab Eb  
Cb

M. S.

Vla.

*f*

72

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

D $\sharp$  D $\flat$  D $\sharp$  E $\flat$  G $\flat$  G $\sharp$

75

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*p* *pp*

*mp*

*p* *pp*

A $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  E $\flat$  D $\flat$

78

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*f*

*mf*

*p* *f*

*p* *f*

E $\flat$  C $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  C $\flat$  E $\sharp$  D $\flat$  D $\sharp$

I met a la - dy in the

81

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*mf*

*mf*

*p* *mf*

*f* *p* *mf* *p* *mp*

D $\flat$  G $\sharp$

meads, Full beau-ti -

84

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*p*

*gliss.*

*p*

*12*

*12*

*12*

*3*

*p*

-ful, a fair - y's child;

*p*

*D#* *A $\flat$*  *F $\sharp$*  *G $\sharp$*   
*B $\flat$*  *D $\sharp$*  *C $\sharp$*

*E $\sharp$*  *C $\flat$*

86

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*f* *6* *p* *6* *mf*

*f* *p*

*mf* *A $\sharp$*  *E $\flat$*  *A $\flat$*  *A $\sharp$*  *mp* *A $\flat$*  *E $\sharp$*  *G $\sharp$*  *B $\sharp$*

*bisbigl.*

*mp* *p*

*mf* *3*

Her hair\_\_ was long,

*3*

her foot\_\_ was light,

*p*

91

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*p*

And \_\_\_\_\_ her \_\_\_\_\_ eyes \_\_\_\_\_ were \_\_\_\_\_

*3*

C# B $\flat$  D $\flat$

93

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*gliss.*

*mf*

*12*

*12*

*12*

F# B# E $\flat$  A#  
A $\natural$  D#

wild.



94

Fl.

*f* *p* *p*

Hp.

*f* *p* *p*

M. S.

*mf*

I made a garland for her

Vla.

*pizz.* *f* *p*

98

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*mf* *p*

*mf* *p*

*p*

*arco* *pizz.* *arco*

*mf* *p*

head, And brace - lets too, and fra - grant

F $\sharp$  G $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  D $\sharp$   
B $\flat$  C $\flat$  B $\flat$

102

Fl. *f*

Hp. *f*

M. S. *f*

Vla. *f*

zone; She looked at me as

A $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  E $\flat$  C $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  F $\sharp$

105

Fl. *p* *mf*

Hp. *p* *mf*

M. S. *p* *mf*

Vla. *pizz.* *arco*

she did love, And made sweet

F $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  A $\flat$  C $\sharp$  E $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  B $\flat$

109

Fl. *f* *mf* *p*

Hp. *f* *mf* *p*

M. S. *f* *mf*  
moan. I set her

Vla. *f* *mf* *p*  
pizz. arco

112

Fl. *mf*

Hp. *mf*

M. S. on my pac - ing steed,

Vla. *mf*

Chords: C $\sharp$ , A $\flat$ , B $\flat$ , E $\flat$ , G $\sharp$ , F $\sharp$ , G $\sharp$ , D $\flat$ , E $\sharp$

114

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*f*

*f*

And noth - ing else saw all day

116

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*sfz* *f* *mf*

*sfz* *f* *mf*

*sfz* *f* *mf*

long, For side long would she bend, and

120

Fl. *p* *pp*

Hp. *p* *pp*

M. S. *p* *pp*  
sing A faer - y's song.

Vla. *p* *pp* *pizz.* *arco*

B $\flat$  E $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  E $\flat$  F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$

124

Fl. *f* *mf*

Hp. *mf* *p* *f* *mf* *bisbigl.*

M. S. *p* *f*  
She found me roots of rel - ish

Vla. *mf* *p*

E $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  E $\flat$  F $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  F $\sharp$   
B $\sharp$  C $\sharp$

128

Fl. *p* 6 *p* *pp*

Hp. *p* *sub. mf* *pp*

M. S. *p* *mf* 3 *p* *pp*  
 sweet, And hon - ey wild, and man - na dew,

Vla. *mf* 6 *p* *pp*

A $\flat$  F $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  A $\sharp$

133

Fl. *mf* *f* *ff*

Hp. *p* *mf* *ff*

M. S. *p* *f*  
 And sure in lan - guage strange she said

Vla. *p* *mf* *f* *ff*

G $\flat$  A $\flat$  A $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  A $\flat$  G $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  E $\sharp$  B $\flat$  B $\sharp$

138

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*ff*

*f*

*mf*

*p*

*ff*

*f*

*mf*

*p*

*ff*

*f*

*mf*

*p*

A# C# F# A# E# E# A# A#  
D# D# B# D# D# D# D#

'I love thee true'.

142

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*ff sub.*

*f*

*ff sub.*

*f*

*ff sub.*

*f*

E# D# A# F# F#  
B# D# D# D#

144

Fl.

6 6 *mf*

Hp.

*mf*

A $\sharp$  E $\sharp$  E $\flat$  A $\flat$  E $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  B $\flat$  B $\sharp$   
B $\flat$  B $\sharp$  D $\flat$

M. S.

Vla.

*pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

*mf*

149

Fl.

*f* 6 6 6 6 6 *mf*

Hp.

*f* *mf*

B $\flat$  B $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  D $\flat$

M. S.

Vla.

*f* *pizz.* *mf*



152

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*f*

6 6 6

G $\sharp$  B $\flat$  A $\flat$  B $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  A $\flat$  A $\sharp$

arco pizz. arco

*f*

156

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*ff* *mf*

*ff* *mf*

8<sup>va</sup>

A $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  A $\flat$   
D $\sharp$  B $\flat$

*mf*

She took me to her Elf - in grot, And there she

*ff* *mf*

162

Fl.

*p*

Hp.

*bisbigl.*

*p*

B $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  E $\flat$  A $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  F $\flat$  F $\sharp$   
D $\sharp$  C $\flat$

M. S.

*p*

wept an~~o~~ghed full sore, And there I shut her wild, wild eyes

Vla.

*pizz.*

*p*

*arco*

168

Fl.

*mf*

*f*

Hp.

*mf*

*f*

F $\flat$  G $\flat$  F $\sharp$  A $\flat$  F $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  G $\flat$  B $\flat$  A $\flat$  F $\sharp$  E $\sharp$  A $\flat$

M. S.

*mf*

With kiss - es four.

Vla.

*ord.*

*pizz.*

*arco*

*mf*

*f*

173

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*f*

And there she lulled me a-sleep,

This musical score is for the beginning of the 'The Swan' ballet from Swan Lake, Act I. It features three staves: Flute (Fl.), Harp (Hp.), and Male Soloist (M. S.). The Flute part begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It starts with a forte (ff) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The Harp part is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a forte (ff) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The Male Soloist part is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a forte (ff) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics for the Male Soloist are: 'And there I dreamed Ah! woe be - tide!'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (ff, f, mf), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions (8va, 3).

181

Fl. *f*

Hp. *mf* *f*

M. S. *f*

Vla. *mf* *f*

The lat - est dream I ev-er dreamt On the cold hill

B $\flat$  D $\sharp$  G $\flat$  G $\sharp$

186

Fl. *ff*

Hp. *ff*

M. S. *ff*

Vla. *ff*

side.

A $\flat$  G $\sharp$  D $\flat$  E $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  C $\flat$  B $\sharp$

189

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*ff*

I saw pale kings and prin - ces too,

*f*

193

Fl.

Hp.

M. S.

Vla.

*f*

Pale war - ri - ors, death - pale were they

*loco*

*loco*

*loco*

*loco*

196

Fl.

*ff*

*8va*

*loco*

[3]

Hp.

*ff*

B $\flat$  E $\flat$  C $\flat$  G $\flat$  C $\sharp$  B $\sharp$  A $\sharp$

M. S.

*ff*

all;

They cried - - 'La\_ Belle\_ Dame sans

Vla.

*ff*

201

Fl.

[3]

3 *f*

Hp.

A $\flat$  C $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  B $\sharp$  E $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  A $\flat$

M. S.

Mer-ci Hath thee in thrall!

Vla.

3 3 3 *f*

205

Fl.

3

Hp.

*f*

B $\flat$  G $\flat$  A $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  G $\flat$  E $\flat$  F $\sharp$  E $\flat$  C $\sharp$

M. S.

*f*

I saw their starved lips in the gloam, With

Vla.

209

Fl.

6

Hp.

D $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\sharp$  B $\sharp$

M. S.

hor - rid warn - ing gaped

Vla.

3 5

211

Fl. *ff* 6 6 6 6 6

Hp. *ff* 3 3 3 3 3

M. S. *ff* wide,

Vla. *ff* 3 3 3 3 3 6 6

E $\flat$  D $\sharp$  A $\flat$  D $\flat$  G $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  D $\sharp$  G $\flat$

(tr)

213

Fl. 6 6 6

Hp. 3 3 3

M. S.

Vla. 6 3 3 3

E $\flat$  D $\flat$  G $\sharp$

\*All trills with semitone up



214

Fl.

6 6

tr

Hp.

3

G $\flat$  C $\sharp$  A $\flat$

M. S.

Vla.

3 3 6 6

215

Fl.

6 6

tr

Hp.

C $\sharp$

M. S.

Vla.

6 6 6 6

216

Fl. *(tr)*

Hp. *f* *bisblig.*

M. S.

Vla. *f* *6* *6* *6* *6* *6* *3*

*G $\flat$  B $\flat$*  *D $\flat$*  *E $\flat$  C $\flat$*  *A $\sharp$  B $\sharp$*

218

Fl. *3* *3* *p*

Hp. *p*

M. S.

Vla. *3* *p*

*F $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  G $\sharp$*  *A $\sharp$  B $\flat$*

223

Fl.

*pp*  $\text{3}$

Hp.

*pp*

D#

M. S.

*pp*  $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$

And I a-woke and found me here,

Vla.

*ord.* *pp*  $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$

230

Fl.

*p* *mf*

Hp.

*p* *mf*

A $\flat$  D $\sharp$  A $\sharp$  G $\sharp$  G $\flat$  G $\sharp$  B $\flat$  A $\flat$  B $\sharp$  G $\flat$  B $\flat$

M. S.

*p*  $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$

On the cold hill's side.

Vla.

*ord.* *p* *mf*

236

Fl. *p*

Hp. *p*

M. S. *p*

Vla. *p*

And this is why I so-journ here, A-lone and pale-ly loi-ter-ing?

F# A

243 **molto rit.**

Fl. *p* *pp*

Hp. *p* *pp*

M. S. *p* *pp*

Vla. *p* *pp*

**molto rit.**

Though the sedge is with-ered from the lake,

F# B

Duration: 9' 30"  
Sep.1, 2019

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