

HELENA – A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (SCENE 2, ACT 3)

Midsummer’s Eve – St. John’s Eve – is a time for magic and spells. In the woods outside Athens, where Helena, Demetrius, Lysander and Hermia are all chasing after each other, the King of the fairies, Oberon, is encamped. He has come to Athens to bless the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta. And being in a generous mood, Oberon decides to grant Helena the love of Demetrius by enchantment. He orders his messenger, Puck, to drop the juice of a certain flower into the eyes of Demetrius, and when the youth awakes, he will dote on the first object he sees. Oberon thinks this will be Helena. Puck, however, mistakes Lysander for Demetrius, and through tried remedy to resolve the blunder, both men begin to pursue Helena through the wood, each professing his undying devotion to her. She, of course, thinks she is being mocked and ridiculed, and that all three of them – Lysander, Demetrius, and Hermia – are co conspirators in this monstrous practical joke. Helena sees it only as a means to do her emotional injury and to deride her.

To Lysander and Demetrius

“O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
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 and mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gently lady so –
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.”

To Hermia

(cont)