

2.[1] *Enter a FAIRY at one door, and [PUCK, or] ROBIN GOODFELLOW at another.*

PUCK How now, spirit; whither wander you?

FAIRY Over hill, over dale,
 Thorough bush, thorough briar,
 Over park, over pale,
 Thorough flood, thorough fire; 5
 I do wander everywhere
 Swifter than the moon's sphere;
 And I serve the Fairy Queen,
 To dew her orbs upon the green.
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be; 10
 In their gold coats spots you see –
 Those be rubies, fairy favours,
 In those freckles live their savours.
 I must go seek some dewdrops here,
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear. 15

Act 2, Scene 1 2] F (*Actus Secundus*); not in Qq 2.1] *Scene 1 / Rowe*; not in Qq, F 0 SD] Qq, F (*Enter a Fairie... and Robin goodfellow...*) 2-9] *So Pope*; as four lines in Qq, F, ending *brier, / ...fire: / ...sphere: / ...greene.* 3, 5 *Thorough...thorough*] Q1; *Through...through* Q2, F

Act 2, Scene 1

0 SD The action now moves to the wood (1.2.80) in place and 'tomorrow night' (1.1.164) in time, in relation to Act 1. The entry refers to the two doors (one on either side of the stage), and the form is common in plays of the period when two characters or groups meet on stage. Here, as often in Qq and F, and in speech headings up to line 42, Puck is called Robin Goodfellow, which is his name (see 34); a 'puck' is a mischievous spirit or goblin, but the character has become generally known by this title; see also p. 7 above.

2-59 The patterned verse of the Fairy, followed by dialogue in rhyming couplets, makes a sharp contrast with the prose of the previous scene. The Fairy was presumably played by a boy but Puck was probably a role for an adult actor; see 16 and n. Wells notes that Robin Goodfellow or Akercok in *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (?1600) is a clown figure, a servant of Belphagor a devil, and was played by a man.

3 **Thorough** This archaic form of 'through' (compare the still-current word 'thoroughfare') remained available for poetic use.

4 **pale fence**; i.e. enclosure or fenced-in area.

Fairies could go anywhere, unhindered by private boundaries.

7 **moon's sphere** Early astronomers thought that each planet was attached to a transparent crystal globe; these hollow 'spheres' revolved one inside the other with the earth at their centre; the term thus came to be used more loosely to mean 'orbit', as at 153 below.

9 **orbs fairy-rings**. These circular bands of grass, darker than the lawns or fields in which they appear, were thought in Shakespeare's age to be the work of fairies; in fact they grow where fungi have enriched the soil.

10 **pensioners** Gentlemen of the royal body-guard, handsome and splendidly dressed. Queen Elizabeth maintained a body of such pensioners, instituted by Henry VIII in 1509.

11 **gold coats**... see The cowslip bears drooping umbels or sprays of yellow scented flowers, with freckles or 'crimson drops' (*Cym* 2.2.38) in them.

13 **savours** fragrance.

14-15 These lines are not differentiated in Qq, F, but they mark a transition from a basically trochaic to iambic tetrameter, and so lead into the iambic pentameter of 16 ff.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone.

Our Queen and all her elves come here anon.

PUCK The King doth keep his revels here tonight.

Take heed the Queen come not within his sight,

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,

Because that she as her attendant hath

A lovely boy stol'n from an Indian king;

She never had so sweet a changeling,

And jealous Oberon would have the child

Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.

But she perforce withholds the lovèd boy,

Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.

And now they never meet in grove or green,

By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen,

But they do square, that all their elves for fear

Creep into acorn cups and hide them there.

FAIRY Either I mistake your shape and making quite,

Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite

Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he

That frights the maidens of the villagery,

Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,

And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,

And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,

Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?

33 sprite] Q1; *spirit* Q2, F 37 housewife] Qq, F (huswife)

16 lob bumpkin, lout. This suggests that Puck was to the Fairy a large and clumsy 'spirit'; was he played by an adult actor? Or is it simply a fairy joke?

17 elves By Shakespeare's time synonymous with fairies, and used of both sexes, though originally elves were male imps; but perhaps anticipating the male fairies, Peaseblossom and the rest, who attend on Bottom in 3.1.

20 passing...wrath bitterly vengeful and angry. 'Wrath' was a common adjectival form in Shakespeare's time, but this is his sole use of it.

22 lovely boy See pp. 29-30 above for a discussion of the significance of this Indian boy.

22 Indian king Oberon and Titania are associated with India at 69 and 124 as if it were their home.

22 changeling Usually an ugly or stupid child

one they have taken by stealth, but here applied to the child stolen. The word must be pronounced here as three syllables.

25 trace range over.

26 perforce by physical force.

30 square quarrel.

33 shrewd mischievous.

34-6 Are you...Skim The verb form changes from the third person ('frights') to the second ('Skim'), as Robin is both 'he' and 'you'.

36 Skim milk i.e. steal the cream.

36 quern Hand-mill for grinding corn. Presumably Puck labours to hamper or spoil the grinding.

37 bootless uselessly. The cream will not turn to butter.

38 barm i.e. froth, or 'head' on ale or beer. Puck prevents the barm or yeast from working.

20 Mislead As later Puck leads astray Quince and

Those that 'Hobgoblin' call you, and 'Sweet Puck', 40
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
 Are not you he?

PUCK

Thou speakest aright;
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.
 I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, 45
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
 In very likeness of a roasted crab,
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
 And on her withered dewlap pour the ale. 50
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
 Sometime for threefoot stool mistaketh me;
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
 And 'Tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;
 And then the whole choir hold their hips and loffe, 55
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.
 But room, Fairy: here comes Oberon.

FAIRY And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!

*Enter [OBERON,] the King of Fairies, at one door, with his train; and
 [TITANIA,] the Queen, at another with hers.*

42 not you] Q1; you not Q2, F 42-3 Thou...night] So F; one line in Qq 46 filly] Q1; silly Q2, F 59 SD] Qq, F
 (Enter the King... and the Queene...)

40 Hobgoblin Another name for Puck, as 'Hob' is simply a familiar by-form of 'Rob' or 'Robin'.

45 bean-fed well-fed. Hence, frisky.

46 filly foal A common expression, since 'foal', though properly meaning a colt, could be used of either sex.

48 crab crab-apple. Used with sugar and spice to flavour hot ale; the drink so made was known as 'lamb's-wool' (*OED* Lamb's-wool 2); compare *LLL* 5.2.925.

50 dewlap i.e. the loose skin of her throat, hanging like that of a cow.

51 aunt old woman, gossip (the only example listed in *OED*).

thinks it probably refers to the 'tail' or backside (*Explorations in Shakespeare's Language*, 1962, pp. 99-100).

55 choir company. They laugh in consort like a chorus.

55-6 loffe...waxen...neeze Puck imitates rustic speech, using archaic forms, 'loffe' for laugh, 'waxen' for wax (= increase, grow loud), and 'neeze' for sneeze.

58 room give way. A stage direction within the text, equivalent to 'stand aside'.

59 SD.2 train Puck is already on stage, and Titania's 'train' includes the unnamed Fairy of this scene, together with Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth