

Original Text

Modern Text

Act 2, Scene 1

Enter a **FAIRY** at one side and **ROBIN (ROBIN GOODFELLOW)** at another

A **FAIRY** and **ROBIN GOODFELLOW** (a “puck” or mischievous spirit) meet onstage.

ROBIN

How now, spirit? Whither wander you?

FAIRY

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire.
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.
In their gold coats spots you see.
Those be rubies, fairy favors.
In those freckles live their savors.
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear.

Farewell, thou lovest of spirits. I’ll be gone.

Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

ROBIN

The king doth keep his revels here tonight.

5 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 stolen from an Indian king.

She never had so sweet a changeling.

10 And jealous Oberon would have the child

Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild.

But she perforce withholds the loved boy,

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

ROBIN

Hello, spirit! Where are you going?

FAIRY

I go over hills and valleys, through bushes and thorns, over parks and fenced-in spaces, through water and fire. I wander everywhere faster than the moon revolves around the Earth. I work for Titania, the Fairy Queen, and organize fairy dances for her in the grass. The cowslip flowers are her bodyguards. You’ll see that their petals have spots on them—those are rubies, fairy gifts. Their sweet smells come from those little freckles. Now I have to go find some dewdrops and hang a pearl earring on every cowslip flower. Goodbye, you dumb old spirit. I’ve got to go. The queen and her elves will be here soon.

ROBIN

The king’s having a party here tonight. Just make sure the queen doesn’t come anywhere near him, because King Oberon is extremely angry. He’s furious because she stole an adorable boy from an Indian king. She’s never kidnapped such a darling human child before, and Oberon’s jealous. He wants the child for himself, to accompany him on his wanderings through the wild forests. But the queen refuses to hand the boy over to Oberon. Instead, she puts flowers in the boy’s hair and makes a fuss over him.

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And now they never meet in grove or green,
 15 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
 20 Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
 That frights the maidens of the villagery,
 Skim milk, and sometimes labor in the quern
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
 25 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
 Those that "Hobgoblin" call you, and "sweet Puck,"
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck.
 Are not you he?

ROBIN

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

FAIRY

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

And now Oberon and Titania refuse to speak to each other, or meet each other anywhere—neither in the forest nor on the plain, nor by the river nor under the stars. They always argue, and the little fairies get so frightened that they hide in acorn cups and won't come out.

FAIRY

Unless I'm mistaken, you're that mischievous and naughty spirit named Robin Goodfellow. Aren't you the one who goes around scaring the maidens in the village, stealing the cream from the top of the milk, screwing up the flour mills, and frustrating housewives by keeping their milk from turning into butter? Aren't you the one who keeps beer from foaming up as it should, and causes people to get lost at night, while you laugh at them? Some people call you "Hobgoblin" and "sweet Puck," and you're nice to them. You do their work for them and give them good luck. That's you, right?

ROBIN

What you say is true. That's me you're talking about, the playful wanderer of the night. I tell jokes to Oberon and make him smile. I'll trick a fat, well-fed horse into thinking that I'm a young female horse. Sometimes I hide at the bottom of an old woman's drink disguised as an apple. When she takes a sip, I bob up against her lips and make her spill the drink all over her withered old neck. Sometimes a wise old woman with a sad story to tell tries to sit down on me, thinking I'm a three-legged stool. But I slip from underneath her and she falls down, crying, "Ow, my butt!" and starts coughing, and then everyone laughs and has fun. But step aside, fairy! Here comes Oberon.

FAIRY

And here's my mistress, Titania. I wish he'd go away!

Act 2, Scene 1, Page 3

*Enter **OBERON**, the King of Fairies, at one side with his train, and **TITANIA**, the Queen, at the other, with hers*

OBERON

I'll met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA

What, jealous Oberon?—Fairies, skip hence.
 I have forsworn his bed and company.

***OBERON**, the Fairy King, and his followers enter.
 On the opposite side of the stage, **TITANIA**, the Fairy Queen, and her followers enter.*

OBERON

How *not* nice to see you, Titania.

TITANIA

What, are you jealous, Oberon?—Fairies, let's get out of here. I've sworn I'll never sleep with

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OBERON

Tarry, rash wanton. Am not I thy lord?

TITANIA

- 50 Then I must be thy lady. But I know
When thou hast stolen away from Fairyland,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
55 Come from the farthest step of India?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

OBERON

- 60 How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus? Glance at my
credit with Hippolyta,
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigouna, whom he ravished?
65 And make him with fair Ægles break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

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TITANIA

- These are the forgeries of jealousy.
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By pavèd fountain, or by rushy brook,
70 Or in the beachèd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
75 Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretched his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
80 Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard.
The fold stands empty in the drownèd field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock.
The nine-men's-morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
85 For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here.
No night is now with hymn or carol blessed.
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
90 That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see

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him or talk to him again.

OBERON

Wait just a minute, you brazen hussy. Aren't you supposed to obey me, your lord and husband?

TITANIA

If you're my lord and husband, I must be your lady and wife, so you're supposed to be faithful to me. But I know for a fact that you snuck away from Fairyland disguised as a shepherd, and spent all day playing straw pipes and singing love poems to your new girlfriend. The only reason you left India was to come here and see that butch Amazon Hippolyta. She was your boot-wearing mistress and your warrior lover, and now that she's getting married to Theseus, you've come to celebrate their marriage.

OBERON

How can you stand there shamelessly talking about me and Hippolyta, when you know that I know about your love for Theseus? Weren't you the one who made him desert Perigouna in the middle of the night, right after he'd raped her? And weren't you the one who made him cheat on all of his other girlfriends, like Aegles, Ariadne, and Antiopa?

TITANIA

These are nothing but jealous lies. Since the beginning of midsummer, my fairies and I haven't been able to meet anywhere to do our dances in the wind without being disturbed by you and your arguments. We haven't been able to meet on a hill or in a valley, in the forest or a meadow, by a pebbly fountain or a rushing stream, or on the beach by the ocean without you disturbing us. And because you interrupt us so that we can't dance for them, the winds have made fogs rise up out of the sea and fall down on the rivers so that the rivers flood, just to get revenge on you. So all the work that oxen and farmers have done in plowing the fields has been for nothing, because the unripe grain has rotted before it was ripe. Sheep pens are empty in the middle of the flooded fields, and the crows get fat from eating the dead bodies of infected sheep. All the fields where people usually play games are filled with mud, and you can't even see the elaborate mazes that people create in the grass, because no one walks in them anymore and they've all grown over. It's not winter here for the human mortals, so they're not protected by the holy hymns and carols that they sing in winter. So the pale, angry moon, who controls the tides, fills the

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The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
 95 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
 Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,
 The chiding autumn, angry winter change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which.
 100 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension.
 We are their parents and original.

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air with diseases. As a consequence of this bad weather and these bad moods the seasons have started to change. Cold frosts spread over the red roses, and the icy winter wears a crown of sweet summer flowers as some sick joke. Spring, summer, fertile autumn and angry winter have all changed places, and now the confused world doesn't know which is which. And this is all because of our argument. We are responsible for this.

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OBERON

Do you amend it then. It lies in you.
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
 105 I do but beg a little changeling boy,
 To be my henchman.

TITANIA

Set your heart at rest.
 The Fairyland buys not the child of me.
 His mother was a votaress of my order,
 And in the spiced Indian air by night
 110 Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking th' embarked traders on the flood,
 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
 115 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
 Following—her womb then rich with my young
 squire—
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land
 To fetch me trifles and return again
 120 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die.
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON

How long within this wood intend you stay?

TITANIA

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.
 125 If you will patiently dance in our round
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us.
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

OBERON

Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

TITANIA

Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away!
 130 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

OBERON

Do something about it, then. You have the power to fix it. Why would Titania want to argue with her Oberon? All I'm asking for is to have that little human boy as part of my crew.

TITANIA

Get over it. I won't give up this child for all of Fairyland. His mother was one of my worshippers, and we always used to gossip together at night in India, sitting together by the ocean and watching the merchant ships sailing on the ocean. We used to laugh to see the sails fill up with wind so that they looked like they had big, pregnant bellies, as if the wind had gotten them pregnant. She would imitate them—since she was already pregnant with the little boy—and she would go sailing over the land herself to go get me little presents, and come back carrying gifts like she was a ship coming back from a voyage. But since she was a mortal, she died giving birth to that boy, and for her sake I'm raising him and will not give him up.

OBERON

How long do you plan to stay here in this forest?

TITANIA

Maybe until after Theseus's wedding day. If you behave yourself and join us in our circle dance and moonlight celebrations, then you can come with us. If not, leave me alone, and I'll stay away from your turf.

OBERON

Give me that boy and I'll come with you.

TITANIA

Not for your entire fairy kingdom.—Come, fairies, let's go. We're going to have an out-and-out brawl if I stay any longer.

Exeunt TITANIA and her train

TITANIA and her FAIRIES exit.

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Act 2, Scene 1, Page 6

OBERON

Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.—(to ROBIN
GOODFELLOW)

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest

- 135 Since once I sat upon a promontory
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the seamaid's music?

ROBIN

I remember.

OBERON

- 140 That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)
Flying between the cold moon and the Earth,
Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
145 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passèd on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
150 Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound.
And maidens call it "love-in-idleness."
Fetch me that flower. The herb I showed thee once.
155 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

ROBIN

- 160 I'll put a girdle round about the Earth
In forty minutes.

OBERON

Well, go on your way, then. You won't leave this
grove until I've paid you back for this
insult. (to ROBIN GOODFELLOW) My dear Puck,
come here. You remember the time when I was
sitting on a cliff, and I heard a mermaid sitting on
a dolphin's back sing such a sweet and
harmonious song that it calmed the stormy sea
and made stars shoot out of the sky so they
could hear her better?

ROBIN

Yes, I remember.

OBERON

That same night, I saw Cupid flying from the
moon to the earth, with all of his arrows ready.
(You couldn't see him, but I could.) He took aim
at a beautiful young virgin who was sitting on a
throne in the western part of the world, and he
shot his arrow of love well enough to have
pierced a hundred thousand hearts. But I could
see that Cupid's fiery arrow was put out by
watery, virginal moonbeams, so the royal virgin
continued her virginal thoughts without being
interrupted by thoughts of love. But I paid
attention to where Cupid's arrow fell. It fell on a
little western flower, which used to be white as
milk but now has turned purple from being
wounded by the arrow of love. Young girls call it
"love-in-idleness." Bring me that flower. I showed
it to you once. If its juice is put on someone's
eyelids while they're asleep, that person will fall
in love with the next living creature he or she
sees. Bring me this plant, and get back here
before the sea monster has time to swim three
miles.

ROBIN

I could go around the world in forty minutes.

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Exit ROBIN

ROBIN exits.

OBERON

- Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
The next thing then she waking looks upon—
165 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey or on busy ape—
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from of her sight—
As I can take it with another herb—

OBERON

When I have the juice of that flower, I'll trickle
some drops of it on Titania's eyes while she's
sleeping. She'll fall madly in love with the first
thing she sees when she wakes up—even if it's
a lion, a bear, a wolf, a bull, a monkey, or an
ape. And before I make her normal again—I can
cure her by treating her with another plant—I'll
make her give me that little boy as my page. But
who's that coming this way? I'll make myself

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170 I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible.
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
175 The one I'll stay, the other stayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n unto this wood.
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

180 You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant.
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
185 Or rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot, love you?

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HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel. And, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.
190 Use me but as your spaniel—spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me. Only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love—
And yet a place of high respect with me—
195 Than to be used as you use your dog?

DEMETRIUS

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit.
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

HELENA

And I am sick when I look not on you.

DEMETRIUS

You do impeach your modesty too much,
200 To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not,
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

HELENA

205 Your virtue is my privilege. For that
It is not night when I do see your face.
Therefore I think I am not in the night.
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world.

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invisible and listen to their conversation.

DEMETRIUS enters, followed by HELENA.

DEMETRIUS

Look, I don't love you, so stop following me around. Where are Lysander and beautiful Hermia? Lysander I want to stop, but Hermia stops my heart from beating. You told me they escaped into this forest. And here I am, going crazy in the middle of the woods because I can't find my Hermia. Go away, get out of here, and stop following me.

HELENA

You attract me to you, you cruel magnet! But you must not attract iron, because my heart is as true as steel. If you let go of your power to attract me, I won't have any power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I ask you to follow me? Do I speak to you kindly? Don't I tell you in the clearest terms that I do not and cannot love you?

HELENA

Yes, but that makes me love you even more. I'm your little dog, Demetrius. The more you beat me, the more I'll love you. Treat me like you would treat a dog—kick me, hit me, neglect me, try to lose me. Just let me follow behind you, even though I'm not good enough for you. Could I ask for a worse place in your heart than to be treated as you would treat a dog? And yet I would consider it an honor to be your dog.

DEMETRIUS

Don't push it. Just looking at you makes me sick.

HELENA

And I get sick when I can't look at you.

DEMETRIUS

You're risking your reputation by leaving the city and stalking someone who doesn't love you. Standing around alone in a deserted area in the middle of the night isn't the best way to protect your virginity.

HELENA

I rely on your virtue to protect me. And because I can see your shining face, it doesn't feel like nighttime to me. This forest doesn't seem deserted when you're here, because you are all the world to me. So how can anyone say I'm

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210 Then how can it be said I am alone
When all the world is here to look on me?

DEMETRIUS

I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

HELENA

The wildest hath not such a heart as you.

215 Run when you will, the story shall be changed.

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Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase.
The dove pursues the griffin. The mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger—bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valor flies.

DEMETRIUS

220 I will not stay thy questions. Let me go.
Or if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

HELENA

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!

225 Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love as men may do.
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

Exit DEMETRIUS

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well.

Exit HELENA

OBERON

230 Fare thee well, nymph. Ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

Enter ROBIN

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

ROBIN

Ay, there it is.

OBERON

I pray thee, give it me.
(*takes flower from ROBIN*)

235 I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite overcanopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk roses and with eglantine.

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alone, when the whole world is here to look at me?

DEMETRIUS

I'll run away from you and hide in the bushes,
and leave you to the mercy of wild animals.

HELENA

The wildest animal isn't as cruel as you are. Run
whenever you want to. The story of Daphne and
Apollo will be changed:

the lustful god Apollo runs away from the virginal
nymph Daphne who pursues him, the dove
chases after the griffin, which is usually its
predator, and the gentle deer tries to hunt down
the tiger—speed is useless when the cowardly
person chases and the brave person runs away.

DEMETRIUS

I'm not sticking around to listen to you any
longer. Leave me alone. Or if you follow me,
you'd better understand that I'll do something
bad to you in the forest.

HELENA

Yes, you already hurt me in the church, in the
town, and in the fields. Shame on you,
Demetrius! Your behavior is an insult to all
women. We cannot fight for love as men can. We
should be pursued and courted. We weren't
made to do the pursuing.

DEMETRIUS exits.

I'll follow you and turn this hell I'm in into a kind
of heaven. It would be heavenly to be killed by
someone I love so much.

HELENA exits.

OBERON

Goodbye, nymph. Before he leaves this part of
the forest, you'll change places: you'll be the one
running away, and he'll be in love with you.

ROBIN enters.

Do you have the flower? Welcome, traveler.

ROBIN

Yes, here it is.

OBERON

Please, give it to me. (*he takes the flower
from ROBIN*) I know a place where wild thyme
blooms, and oxlips and violets grow. It's covered
over with luscious honeysuckle, sweet
muskroses and sweetbrier.

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Original Text

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
240 Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight.
And there the snake throws her enameled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
245 *(gives ROBIN some of the flower)*
Take thou some of it and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes.
But do it when the next thing he espies
250 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love.
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

ROBIN

255 Fear not, my lord. Your servant shall do so.

Exeunt severally

Modern Text

Titania sleeps there sometimes at night, lulled to sleep among the flowers by dances and other delights. Snakes shed their skin there, and the shed skin is wide enough to wrap a fairy in. I'll put the juice of this flower on Titania's eyes, and fill her with horrible delusions and desires. *(he gives ROBIN part of the flower)* You take some of it too, and look around in this part of the forest. A sweet Athenian lady is in love with a young man who wants nothing to do with her. Put some of this flower's juice on his eyes, and make sure to do it in such a way that the next thing he sees will be the lady. You'll be able to tell it's him because he's wearing Athenian clothes. Do it carefully, so that he'll end up loving her more than she loves him. And then make sure to meet me before the rooster's first crow at dawn.

ROBIN

Don't worry, sir. I'm at your service.

They all exit, separately.