The Mad Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow

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From Oberon in fairyland, the king of ghosts and shadows there,
Mad Robbin, I, at his command, am sent to view the night sports here:
What revel rout is kept about,
In every corner where I go,
I’ll o’er see, and merry be,
And make good sport with ho, ho, ho!

More swift than lightening can I fly, and round this airy welkin [heaven] soon,
And, in a minute's space, espy each thing that's done beneath the moon;
There's not a hag nor ghost shall wag,
Nor cry "goblin!" where I go,
But Robin, I, Their feats will spy,
And fear them home with ho, ho, ho!

If any wanderers I meet that from their night-sports do trudge home,
With counterfeiting voice I greet and cause them on with me to roam,
Through woods, through lakes, Through bogs, though brakes,
O'er bush and brier with them I go;
I call upon Them to come on,
And wend me, laughing ho, ho, ho!

Sometimes I meet them like a man; sometimes an ox, sometimes a hound;
And to a horse I turn me can, to trip and trot about them round.
But if to ride My back they stride,
More swift than wind away I go;
O'er hedge and lands, Through pools and ponds,
I whirry, laughing, ho, ho, ho!

When lads and lasses merry be With possets [mulled drink] and with banquets fine,
Unseen of all the company, I eat their cakes and sip their wine;
And to make sport, I fart and snort,
And out the candles I do blow;
The maids I kiss, They shriek, "Who's this?"
I answer nought, but ho, ho, ho!

Yet now and then, the maids to please, I card at midnight up their wool:
And while they sleep, snort, fart and fease, with wheel to threads their flax I pull:
I grind at mill Their malt up still,
I dress their hemp, I spin their tow;
If any wake, And would me take,
I wend me, laughing, ho, ho, ho!

When house or hearth doth dirty lie, I pinch the maids there black and blue;
And, from the bed, the bed-clothes I pull off, and lay them nak’d to view:
twixt sleep and wake I do them take,
And on the key-cold floor them throw;
If out they cry,/Then forth fly I,
And loudly laugh I, ho, ho, ho!

When any need to borrow ought, /we lend them what they do require;
And for the use demand we nought, /our own is all we do desire:
If to repay /They do delay,
Abroad amongst them then I go,
And night by night /I them affright,
With pinching, dreams, and ho, ho, ho!

When lazy queens have nought to do /but study how to cogge [cheat] and lie,
To make debate, and mischief too, /twixt one another secret-ly:
I mark their gloss, [exaggerations] /And do disclose
To them that they had wronged so;
When I have done, /I get me gone,
And leave them scolding, ho, ho, ho!

When men do traps and engines set /in loop-holes, where the vermin creep,
That from their folds and houses fet [steal] /their ducks and geese, their lambs and sheep:
I spy the ‘gin,/And enter in,
And seems a vermin taken so,
But when they there /Approach me near,
I leap out, laughing, ho, ho, ho!

By wells and gils [rivulets] in meadows green, /we nightly dance our hedegies [rustic dance],
And to our fairy King and Queen /we chant our moon-light harmonies.
When larks ’gain sing, /Away we fling;
And babes new born steal as we go;
An elf in bed /We leave instead,
And wend us, laughing, ho, ho, ho!

From hag-bred Merlin's time have I /thus nightly revel’d to and fro:
And, for my pranks, men call me by /the name of Robin Good-fellow:
Fiends, ghosts, and sprites /That haunt the nights,
The hags and goblins do me know,
And beldames old, /My feats have told,
So Vale, Vale, ho, ho, ho!

Finis.