

The Merry Wives of Windsor

PROLOGUE

CHORUS

In old Windsor town at the sign of the plow,
There lived a molecatcher shall I tell you now?
He had a young wife, she was buxom and gay,
And she and another young farmer would play.

Lo ta lie day, lo ta lie little aye lo ta lie day.

The farmer he knocked at her door and did say,
"Where is the molecatcher, good woman I pray?"
"Why he's out catching moles love, you need have no fear."
But she didn't know the molecatcher was near.

Lo ta lie day, lo ta lie little aye lo ta lie day.

Well he crept up the stairs in the midst of their frolic.
The molecatcher caught him right up by the jacket.
Said "I've been a molecatcher for most of me life,
But here's the first mole I ever caught with me wife!"

Lo ta lie day, lo ta lie little aye lo ta lie day.

"Well I'll make ye pay dearly for tillin' me ground.
I'll take from your pocket a full twenty pound."
"Twenty pound," said the farmer, "I really can't mind,
For it only works out about tuppence a time!"

Lo ta lie day, lo ta lie little aye lo ta lie day.
Lo ta lie day, lo ta lie little aye lo ta lie day.

Act I. Scene 1
ACT I. SCENE 1.
Windsor. Before PAGE's House.

[Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

SHALLOW

Sir Hugh, persuade me not; I will make a Star-chamber matter of it: if he were twenty Sir John Falstaffs, he shall not abuse Robert Shallow, esquire.

SLENDER

In the county of Gloucester, justice of peace and "Coram".

SHALLOW

Ay, cousin Slender, and "custos rotulorum".

SLENDER

Ay, and... "cuspidorum" too; and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself "armageddon", in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, "armageddon".

SHALLOW

"Armiger." Ay, that I do; and have done any time these three hundred years.

SLENDER

All his successors gone before him hath done't; and all his ancestors that come after him may: they may give the dozen white luses in their coat.

SHALLOW

It is an old coat.

SIR HUGH EVANS

The dozen white louses do become an old cod well; it agrees well, passant; it is a familiar beast to man, and signifies love.

SHALLOW

The luse is the fresh fish. The salt fish is an "old cod."

(...)

SIR HUGH EVANS

That is all one. If Sir John Falstaff have committed disparagements unto you, I am of the church, and will be glad to do my benevolence to make atonements and compromises between you.

SHALLOW

The council shall hear it; it is a riot.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is not meet the council hear a riot; there is no fear of Got in a riot: the council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of Got, and not to hear a riot; take your vizaments in that.

SHALLOW

Ha! o' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is petter that friends is the sword, and end it: and there is also another device in my prain, which peradventure prings goot discretions with it: there is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master George Page, which is pretty virginity.

SLENDER

Mistress Anne Page? She has brown hair, and speaks small, like a woman.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is that fery person for all the 'orld, as just as you will desire; and seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold and silver, is her grandsire upon his death's-bed (Got deliver to a joyful resurrections!) give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old: it were a goot motion if we leave our pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

SLENDER

Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Ay, and her father is make her a petter penny.

SHALLOW

I know the young gentlewoman; she has good gifts.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is good gifts.

SHALLOW

Well, let us see honest Master Page. Is Falstaff there?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Shall I tell you a lie? I do despise a liar as I do despise one that is false, or as I despise one that is not true. The knight, Sir John, is there; and, I beseech you, be ruled by your well-willers. I will peat the door for Master Page.

[Knocks]

What, ho! Got pless your house here!

GEORGE PAGE

[Within] Who's there?

[Enter GEORGE PAGE]

SIR HUGH EVANS

Here is Got's plessing, and your friend, and Justice Shallow; and here young Master Slender, that peradventures shall tell you another tale, if matters grow to your likings.

GEORGE PAGE

I am glad to see your worships well.
I thank you for my venison, Master Shallow.

SHALLOW

Master Page, I am glad to see you: much good do it your good heart! I wished your venison better; it was ill killed. How doth good Mistress Page?—and I thank you always with my heart, la! with my heart.

GEORGE PAGE

Sir, I thank you.

SHALLOW

Sir, I thank you; by yea and no, I do.

GEORGE PAGE

I am glad to see you, good Master Slender.

SLENDER

How does your fallow greyhound, sir? I heard say he was outrun on Cotsall.

GEORGE PAGE

It could not be judged, sir.

(...)

SHALLOW

Is Sir John Falstaff here?

GEORGE PAGE

Sir, he is within; and I would I could do a good office between you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

SHALLOW

He hath wronged me, Master Page.

GEORGE PAGE

Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

SHALLOW

If it be confessed, it is not redress'd. Is not that so, Master Page? He hath wronged me; indeed he hath, at a word, he hath, believe me: Robert Shallow, esquire, saith, he is wronged.

GEORGE PAGE

Here comes Sir John.

[Enter FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, PISTOL, and HOST]

FALSTAFF

Now, Master Shallow, you'll complain of me to the king?

SHALLOW

Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer, and broke open my lodge.

FALSTAFF

But not kissed your keeper's daughter?

SHALLOW

Tut, a pin! this shall be answered.

FALSTAFF

I will answer it straight; I have done all this.
There, that is now answered.

SHALLOW

The council shall know this.

FALSTAFF

'Twere better for you if it were known in counsel:
you'll be laughed at.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Pauca verba, Sir John; goot worts.

FALSTAFF

Good worts! Good cabbage! Slender, I broke your
head: what matter have you against me?

SLENDER

Marry, sir, I have matter in my head against you;
and against your cony-catching rascals, Bardolph,
Nym, and Pistol. *They carried me to the tavern and
made me drunk, and afterward picked my pocket.*

BARDOLPH

You Banbury cheese!

SLENDER

Ay, it is no matter.

PISTOL

How now, Mephostophilus!

SLENDER

Ay, it is no matter.

NYM

Slice, I say! pauca, pauca: slice! that's my humour.

SLENDER

Where's Simple, my boy? Can you tell, cousin?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Peace, I pray you. Now let us understand. There is three umpires in this matter, as I understand; that is, Master Page, fidelicet Master Page; and there is myself, fidelicet myself; and the three party is, lastly and finally, mine host of the Garter.

GEORGE PAGE

We three, to hear it and end it between them.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Fery goot: I will make a prief of it in my note-book; and we will afterwards 'ork upon the cause with as great discreetly as we can.

FALSTAFF

Pistol!

PISTOL

She hears with ears.

SIR HUGH EVANS

The tevil and his tam! what phrase is this, "She hears with ears?" Why, it is affectations.

FALSTAFF

Pistol, did you pick Master Slender's purse?

SLENDER

Ay, by [this handkerchief](#), did she, or I would I might never come in mine own great chamber again else, of seven groats in mill-sixpences, and two Edward shovel-boards, that cost me two shilling and two pence apiece of Yed Miller, by [this handkerchief](#).

FALSTAFF

Is this true, Pistol?

SIR HUGH EVANS

No; it is false Pistol, if it is a pick-purse.

PISTOL

Ha, thou mountain-foreigner! Sir John and Master mine,
I combat challenge of this latten bilbo.
Word of denial in thy labras here!
Word of denial: froth and scum, thou liest!

SLENDER

By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

NYM

Be avised, sir, and pass good humours: I will say
"marry trap" with you, if you run the nuthook's
humour on me; that is the very note of it.

SLENDER

By... those pants, then, he in the red face had it; for
though I cannot remember what I did when you made me
drunk, yet I am not altogether a donkey.

FALSTAFF

What say you, Scarlet and John?

BARDOLPH

Why, sir, for my part I say the gentleman had drunk
himself out of his five sentences.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is his five senses: fie, what the ignorance is!

BARDOLPH

And being fap, sir, was, as they say, cashiered; and
so conclusions passed the careers.

SLENDER

Ay, you spake in Latin then too; but 'tis no
matter: I'll ne'er be drunk whilst I live again,
but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick:
if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have
the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

SIR HUGH EVANS

So Got 'udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

FALSTAFF

You hear all these matters denied, gentlemen; you hear it.

[Enter ANNE PAGE, ALICE FORD and MARGARET PAGE]

GEORGE PAGE

Nay, daughter, carry the wine in; we'll drink within.

SLENDER

O heaven! This is Mistress Anne Page.

[Exit ANNE PAGE]

GEORGE PAGE

How now, Mistress Ford!

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, by my troth, you are very well met:
by your leave, good mistress.

[Kisses her]

GEORGE PAGE

Wife, bid these gentlemen welcome. Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner: come, gentlemen, I hope we shall drink down all unkindness.

[Exeunt all except SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

SLENDER

I had rather than forty shillings I had my Book of Songs and Sonnets here.

[Enter SIMPLE]

How now, Simple! where have you been? I must wait on myself, must I? You have not the Book of Riddles about you, have you?

SIMPLE

Book of Riddles! why, did you not lend it to Alice Shortcake upon All-hallowmas last, a fortnight afore Michaelmas?

SHALLOW

Come, coz; come, coz; we stay for you. A word with you, coz; marry, this, coz: there is, as 'twere, a tender, a kind of tender, made afar off by Sir Hugh here. Do you understand me?

SLENDER

Ay, sir, you shall find me reasonable; if it be so,
I shall do that that is reason.

SHALLOW

Nay, but understand me.

SLENDER

So I do, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Give ear to his motions, Master Slender: I will
description the matter to you, if you be capacity of it.

SLENDER

Nay, I will do as my cousin Shallow says: I pray
you, pardon me; he's a justice of peace in his
country, simple though I stand here.

SIR HUGH EVANS

But that is not the question: the question is
concerning your marriage.

SHALLOW

Ay, there's the point, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Marry, is it; the very point of it; to Mistress Anne Page.

SLENDER

Why, if it be so, I will marry her upon any
reasonable demands.

SIR HUGH EVANS

But can you affection the 'oman? Let us command to
know that of your mouth or of your lips; for divers
philosophers hold that the lips is parcel of the
mouth. Therefore, precisely, can you carry your
good will to the maid?

SHALLOW

Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

SLENDER

I hope, sir, I will do as it shall become one that
would do reason.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Nay, Got's lords and his ladies! you must speak
possitable, if you can carry her your desires
towards her.

SHALLOW

That you must. Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?

SLENDER

I will do a greater thing than that, upon your
request, cousin, in any reason.

SHALLOW

Nay, conceive me, conceive me, sweet coz: what I do
is to pleasure you, coz. Can you love the maid?

SLENDER

I will marry her, sir, at your request: but if there
be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may
decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are
married and have more occasion to know one another;
I hope, upon familiarity will grow more contempt:
but if you say, "Marry her," I will marry her; that
I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is a fery discretion answer; save the fall is in
the 'ort "dissolutely": the 'ort is, according to our
meaning, "resolutely": his meaning is good.

SHALLOW

Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

SLENDER

Ay, or else I would I might be hung.. hanged!... la!

SHALLOW

Here comes fair Mistress Anne.

[Re-enter ANNE PAGE]

Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

ANNE PAGE

The dinner is on the table; my father desires your
worships' company.

SHALLOW

I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Od's plessed will! I will not be absence at the grace.

[Exeunt SHALLOW and SIR HUGH EVANS]

ANNE PAGE

Will't please your worship to come in, sir?

SLENDER

No, I thank you, forsooth, heartily; I am very well.

ANNE PAGE

The dinner attends you, sir.

SLENDER

I am not a-hungry, I thank you, forsooth. Go, sirrah, for all you are my boy, go wait upon my cousin Shallow.

[Exit SIMPLE]

A justice of peace sometimes may be beholding to his friend for a boy. I keep but three men and a boy yet, till my mother be dead: but what though? Yet I live like a poor gentleman born.

ANNE PAGE

I may not go in without your worship: they will not sit till you come.

SLENDER

I' faith, I'll eat nothing; I thank you as much as though I did.

ANNE PAGE

I pray you, sir, walk in.

SLENDER

I had rather walk here, I thank you. I bruised my shin th' other day with playing at sword and dagger with a master of fence; three veneys for a dish of stewed prunes; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since. Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears i' the town?

ANNE PAGE

I think there are, sir; I heard them talked of.

SLENDER

I love the sport well but I shall as soon quarrel at it as any man in England. You are afraid, if you see the bear loose, are you not?

ANNE PAGE

Ay, indeed, sir.

SLENDER

That's meat and drink to me, now. I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chain; but, I warrant you, the women have so cried and shrieked at it, that it passed: but women, indeed, cannot abide 'em; they are very ill-favored rough things – bears... not (women...)

[Re-enter GEORGE PAGE]

GEORGE PAGE

Come, gentle Master Slender, come; we stay for you.

SLENDER

I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

GEORGE PAGE

By cock and pie, you shall not choose, sir! come, come.

SLENDER

Nay, pray you, lead the way.

GEORGE PAGE

Come on, sir.

SLENDER

Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

ANNE PAGE

Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

SLENDER

I'll rather be unmannerly than troublesome.
You do yourself wrong, indeed, la!

[Exeunt]

Act I. Scene 2
Act I. SCENE II.
The Same.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE]

SIR HUGH EVANS

Go your ways, and ask of Doctor Caius' house which is the way: and there dwells one Mistress Quickly, which is in the manner of his nurse, or his dry nurse, or his cook, or his laundry, his washer, and his wringer.

SIMPLE

Well, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Nay, it is petter yet. Give her this letter; for it is a 'oman that altogether's acquaintance with Mistress Anne Page: and the letter is, to desire and require her to solicit your master's desires to Mistress Anne Page. I pray you, be gone: I will make an end of my dinner; there's pippins and cheese to come.

[Exeunt]

Act I. Scene 3.
ACT I. SCENE 3.
A Room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF, HOST, BARDOLPH, NYM, PISTOL, and ROBIN]

FALSTAFF

Mine host of the Garter!

HOST

What says my bully-rook? speak scholarly and wisely.

FALSTAFF

Truly, mine host, I must turn away some of my followers.

HOST

Discard, bully Hercules; cashier: let them wag; trot, trot.

FALSTAFF

I sit at ten pounds a week.

HOST

Thou'rt an emperor, Caesar, Keisar, and Pheezar. I will entertain Bardolph; he shall draw, he shall tap: said I well, bully Hector?

FALSTAFF

Do so, good mine host.

HOST

I have spoke; let him follow.

[To BARDOLPH]

Let me see thee froth and lime: I am at a word; follow.

[Exit]

FALSTAFF

Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade: an old cloak makes a new jerkin; a withered serving-man a fresh tapster. Go; adieu.

BARDOLPH

It is a life that I have desired: I will thrive.

PISTOL

O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot wield?

[Exit BARDOLPH]

NYM

He was gotten in drink: is not the humour conceited?

FALSTAFF

I am glad I am so acquit of this tinderbox: his thefts were too open; his filching was like an unskilful singer; he kept not time.

NYM

The good humour is to steal at a minute's rest.

PISTOL

"Convey", the wise it call. "Steal!" foh! a fico for the phrase!

FALSTAFF

Well, I am almost out at heels.

PISTOL

Why, then, let kibes ensue.

FALSTAFF

There is no remedy; I must cony-catch; I must shift.

PISTOL

Young ravens must have food.

FALSTAFF

Which of you know Ford of this town?

PISTOL

I ken the wight: he is of substance good.

FALSTAFF

My honest rogues, I will tell you what I am about.

PISTOL

Two yards, and more.

FALSTAFF

No quips now, Pistol! Indeed, I am in the waist two yards about; but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift. Briefly, I do mean to make love to Ford's wife: I spy entertainment in her; she discourses, she carves, she gives the leer of invitation: I can construe the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behavior, to be Englished rightly, is, "I am Sir John Falstaff's."

PISTOL

He hath studied her well, and translated her will, out of honesty into English.

NYM

The anchor is deep: will that humour pass?

FALSTAFF

Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels.

PISTOL

As many devils attend her! And "To her, boy!" say I.

NYM

The humour rises; it is good: humour me the angels.

FALSTAFF

I have writ me here a letter to her: and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious eyelids; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

PISTOL

Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

NYM

I thank thee for that humour.

FALSTAFF

O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass! Here's another letter to her: she bears the purse too; she is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will

be cheater to them both, and they shall be
exchequers to me; they shall be my East and West
Indies, and I will trade to them both. Go bear thou
this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to
Mistress Ford: we will thrive, mates, we will thrive.

PISTOL

Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become,
And by my side wear steel? Then, Lucifer take all!

NYM

I will run no base humour. Here, take the
humour-letter! I will keep the 'havior of reputation.

FALSTAFF

[To ROBIN]

Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly;
Sail like my pinnace to these golden shores.

[To PISTOL and NYM]

Rogues, hence, avaunt! vanish like hailstones, go;
Trudge, plod away o' the hoof; seek shelter, pack!
Falstaff will learn the humour of the age,
French thrift, you rogues; myself and skirted page.

[Exeunt FALSTAFF and ROBIN]

PISTOL

Let vultures gripe thy guts! (...)
Tester I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,
Base Phrygian Turk!

NYM

I have operations
In my head, which be humours of revenge.

PISTOL

Wilt thou revenge?

NYM

By welkin and her stars!

PISTOL

With wit or steel?

NYM

With both the humours, I:
I will discuss the humour of this love to Page.

PISTOL

And I to Ford shall eke unfold
How Falstaff, varlet vile,
His dove will prove, his gold will hold,
And his soft couch defile.

NYM

My humour shall not cool: I will incense Page to
deal with poison; I will possess him with
yellowness, for the revolt of mine is dangerous:
that is my true humour.

PISTOL

Thou art the Mars of malecontents: I second thee; troop on.

[Exeunt]

Act I. Scene 4.
ACT I. SCENE 4.
A Room in DOCTOR CAIUS' House.

[Enter FENTON]

FENTON

Mistress Quickly? Mistress Quickly?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[Off Stage]

What, John Rugby! I pray thee, go to the casement,
and see if you can see my master, Master Doctor
Caius, coming. If he do, i' faith, and find any
body in the house, here will be an old abusing of
God's patience and the king's English.

[FENTON Hides in Closet]

[Enter RUGBY, MISTRESS QUICKLY, and SIMPLE]

RUGBY

I'll go watch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Go; and we'll have a posset for't soon at night, in
faith, at the latter end of a sea-coal fire.

[Exit RUGBY]

An honest, willing, kind fellow, as ever servant
shall come in house withal, and, I warrant you, no
tell-tale nor no breed-bate: his worst fault is,
that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish
that way: but nobody but has his fault; but let
that pass. Peter Simple, you say your name is?

SIMPLE

Ay, for fault of a better.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And Master Slender's your master?

SIMPLE

Ay, forsooth.

(...)

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, heaven send Anne Page no worse fortune! Tell Master Parson Evans I will do what I can for your master: Anne is a good girl, and I wish—

[Re-enter RUGBY]

RUGBY

Out, alas! here comes my master.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

We shall all be shent. Run in here, good young man.

[Shuts SIMPLE in the closet]

[FENTON pushes SIMPLE out of closet]

Go into this closet: he will not stay long.

[Shuts SIMPLE in the closet again]

What, John Rugby! John! What, John, I say! Go, John, go inquire for my master; I doubt he be not well, that he comes not home.

[Singing]

And down, down, a down-a, etc.

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS]

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vat is you sing, Quickly? I do not like dese noise. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet *une boîtime verte*— a box, a green-a box. Do intend vat I speak? A green-a box.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Ay, forsooth; I'll fetch it you.

(...)

DOCTOR CAIUS

Fe, fe, fe, fe! Ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m'en vais voir à le court— la grande affaire.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Is it this, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Oui, mette-le au mon pocket. Dépêche, dépêche!

Quickly, Quickly!

Vere is dat knave Rugby? What, Jack Rugby!

RUGBY

Um, it's John, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS

You are John Rugby, and you are Jack Rugby. Come, take-a your rapier, and come after my heel to the court.

RUGBY

'Tis ready, sir, here in the porch.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By my trot, I tarry too long. 'Od's me!

Qu' ai-je oublié! Dere is some simples in my closet, dat I will not for the varld I shall leave behind.

(...)

O *diable, diable!* Vat is in my closet? Villain! *Larron!*

[Pulling SIMPLE out]

Rugby, my rapier!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Good master, be content.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Wherefore shall I be content-a?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

The young man is an honest man.

DOCTOR CAIUS

What shall de honest man do in my closet? dere is no honest man dat shall come in my closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I beseech you, be not so phlegmatic. Hear the truth of it: he came of an errand to me from Parson Hugh.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vell.

SIMPLE

Ay, forsooth; to desire her to—

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Peace, I pray you.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Peace-a your tongue. Speak-a your tale.

SIMPLE

To desire this honest gentlewoman, your maid, to speak a good word to Mistress Anne Page for my master in the way of marriage.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

This is all, indeed, la! but I'll ne'er put my finger in the fire, and need not.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Sir Hugh send-a you? Rugby, *baille* me some paper. Tarry you a little-a while.

[Writes]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[Aside to SIMPLE] I am glad he is so quiet: if he had been thoroughly moved, you should have heard him so loud and so melancholy. But notwithstanding, man, I'll do you your master what good I can: and the very yea and the no is, the French doctor, my master,—I may call him my master, look you, for I keep his house; and I wash, wring, brew, bake, scour, dress meat and drink, make the beds and do all myself. *For I tell you friend, he puts all his privates in me.*

SIMPLE

[Aside to MISTRESS QUICKLY] 'Tis a great charge to come under one body's hand.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[Aside to SIMPLE] Are you avised o' that? you shall find it a great charge: and to be up early and down late; but notwithstanding,—to tell you in your ear; I would have no words of it,—my master himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page: but notwithstanding that, I know Anne's mind,—that's neither here nor there.

DOCTOR CAIUS

You jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh; by gar, it is a shallenge: I will cut his troat in dee park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest

to meddle or make. You may be gone; it is not good
you tarry here. By gar, I will cut all his two
stones; by gar, he shall not have a stone to throw
at his dog:

[Exit SIMPLE]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

DOCTOR CAIUS

It is no matter-a ver dat: do not you tell-a me
dat I shall have Anne Page for myself? By gar, I
vill kill de Jack priest; and I have appointed mine
host of de Jarteer to measure our weapon. By gar, I
will myself have Anne Page.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well. We
must give folks leave to prate: what, the good-year!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Rugby, come to the court with me. By gar, if I have
not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my
door. Follow my heels, Rugby.

[Exeunt DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

You shall have An- fool's-head of your own. No, I
know Anne's mind for that: never a woman in Windsor
knows more of Anne's mind than I do; nor can do more
than I do with her, I thank heaven.

(...)

[Enter FENTON from closet]

FENTON

How now, good woman? How dost thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

The better that it pleases your good worship to ask.

FENTON

What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

In truth, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and gentle; and one that is your friend, I can tell you that by the way; I praise heaven for it.

FENTON

Shall I do any good, thinkest thou? shall I not lose my suit?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Troth, sir, all is in his hands above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, I'll be sworn on a book, she loves you. Have not your worship a wart above your eye?

FENTON

Yes, marry, have I; what of that?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, thereby hangs a tale: good faith, it is such another Nan; but, I detest, an honest maid as ever broke bread: we had an hour's talk of that wart. I shall never laugh but in that maid's company! But indeed she is given too much to allicholy and musing: but for you—well, go to.

FENTON

Well, I shall see her to-day. Hold, there's money for thee; let me have thy voice in my behalf: if thou seest her before me, commend me.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Will I? I' faith, that we will; and I will tell your worship more of the wart the next time we have confidence; and of other wooers.

FENTON

Well, farewell; I am in great haste now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Farewell to your worship.

[Exit FENTON]

Truly, an honest gentleman: but Anne loves him not; for I know Anne's mind as well as another does. Out upon't! what have I forgot?

[Exit]

Act II. Scene 1.
ACT II SCENE 1.
Before PAGE's House.

[Enter MARGARET PAGE with a letter]

MARGARET PAGE

What, have I scaped love-letters in the holiday-time
of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them?
Let me see.

[Reads]

Ask me no reason why I love you; for though
Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him
not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more
am I; go to then, there's sympathy: you are merry,
so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you
love sack, and so do I; would you desire better
sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page, at
the least, if the love of soldier can suffice,
that I love thee. I will not say, pity me; 'tis
not a soldier-like phrase: but I say, love me. By me,

[Enter ALICE FORD with a letter]

MARGARET PAGE and ALICE FORD

Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might
For thee to fight,
— JOHN FALSTAFF

ALICE FORD

(...) O wicked, wicked world!
One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with
age to show himself a young gallant!

MARGARET PAGE

In the devil's name! What unweighed behavior
hath this Flemish drunkard picked out of my
conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me?

ALICE FORD

Why, he hath not been thrice in my company!

MARGARET PAGE

What did I say to him?

ALICE FORD

I was then frugal of my mirth.

MARGARET PAGE

Heaven forgive me!

ALICE FORD

I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting
down of fat men,

MARGARET PAGE

How shall I be revenged on him? For revenged I will be,

BOTH

As sure as his guts are made of puddings.

ALICE FORD

Mistress Page! trust me, I was going to your house.

MARGARET PAGE

And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very ill.

ALICE FORD

Nay, I'll ne'er believe that; I have to show to the contrary.

MARGARET PAGE

Faith, but you do, in my mind.

ALICE FORD

Well, I do then; yet I say I could show you to the
contrary. O Mistress Page, give me some counsel!

MARGARET PAGE

What's the matter, woman?

ALICE FORD

O woman, if it were not for one trifling respect, I
could come to such honour!

MARGARET PAGE

Hang the trifle, woman! take the honour. What is
it? Dispense with trifles; what is it?

ALICE FORD

If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment or so,
I could be knighted.

MARGARET PAGE

What? thou liest! Sir Alice Ford! These knights will hack; and so thou shouldst not alter the article of thy gentry.

ALICE FORD

We burn daylight: here, read, read; perceive how I might be knighted. I shall think the worse of fat men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of men's liking: and yet he would not swear; praised women's modesty; and gave such orderly and well-behaved reproof to all uncomeliness, that I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words; but they do no more adhere and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of "Green Sleeves." What tempest, I trow, threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly, ashore at Windsor? How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease. Did you ever hear the like?

MARGARET PAGE

Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs! To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here's the twin-brother of thy letter: but let thine inherit first; for, I protest, mine never shall. I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names—sure, more,—and these are of the second edition: he will print them, out of doubt; for he cares not what he puts into the press, when he would put us two. I had rather be a giantess, and lie under Mount Pelion. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtles ere one chaste man.

ALICE FORD

Why, this is the very same; the very hand, the very words. What doth he think of us?

MARGARET PAGE

Nay, I know not: it makes me almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty. I'll entertain myself like one that I am not acquainted withal; for, sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.

ALICE FORD

“Boarding,” call you it? I’ll be sure to keep him
above deck.

MARGARET PAGE

So will I. If he come under my hatches, I’ll never
to sea again.

BOTH

Let’s be revenged on him!

MARGARET PAGE

Let’s appoint him a meeting; give him a show of comfort in
his suit and lead him on with a fine-baited delay,
till he hath pawned his horses to mine host of the Garter.

ALICE FORD

Nay, I will consent to act any villany against him,
that may not sully the chariness of our honesty. O,
that my husband saw this letter! it would give
eternal food to his jealousy.

MARGARET PAGE

Why, look where he comes; and my good man too: he’s
as far from jealousy as I am from giving him cause;
and that I hope is an unmeasurable distance.

ALICE FORD

You are the happier woman.

MARGARET PAGE

Let’s consult together against this greasy knight.
Come hither.

[They retire]

[Enter FRANCIS FORD with PISTOL, and GEORGE PAGE with NYM]

FRANCIS FORD

Well, I hope it be not so.

PISTOL

Hope is a curtal dog in some affairs:
Sir John affects thy wife.

FRANCIS FORD

But my wife is not young.

PISTOL

He wooes both high and low, both rich and poor,
Both young and old, one with another, Ford;
He loves the gallimaufry: Ford, perpend.

FRANCIS FORD

Love my wife!

PISTOL

With liver burning hot. Prevent, or go thou,
Like Sir Actaeon he, with Ringwood at thy heels:
O, odious is the name!

FRANCIS FORD

What name?

PISTOL

The horn, I say. Farewell.
Take heed, have open eye, for thieves do foot by night:
Take heed, ere summer comes or cuckoo-birds do sing.
Away, Sir Corporal Nym!
Believe it, Page; he speaks sense.

[Exit]

FRANCIS FORD

[Aside] I will be patient; I will find out this.

NYM

[To PAGE] And this is true; I like not the humour
of lying. He hath wronged me in some humours: I
should have borne the humoured letter to her; but I
have a sword and it shall bite upon my necessity.
He loves your wife; there's the short and the long.
My name is Corporal Nym; I speak and I avouch; 'tis
true: my name is Nym and Falstaff loves your wife.
Adieu. I love not the humour of bread and cheese,
and there's the humour of it. Adieu.

[Exit]

GEORGE PAGE

"The humour of it," quoth a'! here's a fellow
frights English out of his wits.

FRANCIS FORD

I will seek out Falstaff.

GEORGE PAGE

I never heard such a drawling, affecting rogue.

FRANCIS FORD

If I do find it: well.

GEORGE PAGE

I will not believe such a Cataian, though the priest
o' the town commended him for a true man.

FRANCIS FORD

'Twas a good sensible fellow: well.

GEORGE PAGE

How now, Meg!

[MARGARET PAGE and ALICE FORD come forward]

MARGARET PAGE

Whither go you, George? Hark you.

ALICE FORD

How now, sweet Frank! why art thou melancholy?

FRANCIS FORD

I melancholy! I am not melancholy. Get you home, go.

ALICE FORD

Faith, thou hast some crotchets in thy head. Now,
will you go, Mistress Page?

MARGARET PAGE

Have with you. You'll come to dinner, George.

[Aside to ALICE FORD] Look who comes yonder:
she shall be our messenger to this paltry knight.

ALICE FORD

[Aside to MARGARET PAGE] Trust me, I thought on her:
she'll fit it.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

MARGARET PAGE

You are come to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Ay, forsooth; and, I pray, how does good Mistress Anne?

MARGARET PAGE

Go in with us and see: we have an hour's talk with you.

[Exeunt MARGARET PAGE, ALICE FORD, and MISTRESS QUICKLY]

GEORGE PAGE

How now, Master Ford!

FRANCIS FORD

You heard what this knave told me, did you not?

GEORGE PAGE

Yes: and you heard what the other told me?

FRANCIS FORD

Do you think there is truth in them?

GEORGE PAGE

Hang 'em, slaves! I do not think the knight would offer it: but these that accuse him in his intent towards our wives are a yoke of his discarded men; very rogues, now they be out of service.

FRANCIS FORD

Were they his men?

GEORGE PAGE

Marry, were they.

FRANCIS FORD

I like it never the better for that. Does he lie at the Garter?

GEORGE PAGE

Ay, marry, does he. If he should intend this voyage towards my wife, I would turn her loose to him; and what he gets more of her than sharp words, let it lie on my head.

FRANCIS FORD

I do not misdoubt my wife; but I would be loath to turn them together. A man may be too confident: I would have nothing lie on my head: I cannot be thus satisfied.

GEORGE PAGE

Look where my ranting host of the Garter comes:
there is either liquor in his pate or money in his
purse when he looks so merrily.

[Enter HOST]

How now, mine host!

HOST

How now, bully-rook! thou'rt a gentleman.
Cavaleiro-justice, I say!

[Enter SHALLOW]

SHALLOW

I follow, mine host, I follow. Good even and
twenty, good Master Page! Master Page, will you go
with us? we have sport in hand.

HOST

Tell him, cavaleiro-justice; tell him, bully-rook.

SHALLOW

Sir, there is a fray to be fought tomorrow morn between Sir Hugh
the Welsh priest and Caius the French doctor.

FRANCIS FORD

Good mine host o' the Garter, a word with you.

[Drawing him aside]

HOST

What sayest thou, my bully-rook?

SHALLOW

[To PAGE] Will you go with us to behold it? My
merry host hath had the measuring of their weapons;
and, I think, hath appointed them contrary places;
for, believe me, I hear the parson is no jester.
Hark, I will tell you what our sport shall be.

[They converse apart]

HOST

Hast thou no suit against my knight, my
guest-cavaleire?

FRANCIS FORD

None, I protest: but I'll give you a pottle of
burnt sack to give me recourse to him and tell him
my name is Brook; only for a jest.

HOST

My hand, bully; thou shalt have egress and regress;
– said I well? – and thy name shall be Brook. It is
a merry knight. Will you go, mein herrs?

SHALLOW

Have with you, mine host.

GEORGE PAGE

I have heard the Frenchman hath good skill in
his rapier.

SHALLOW

Tut, sir, I could have told you more. In these times
you stand on distance, your passes, stoccadoes, and
I know not what: 'tis the heart, Master Page; 'tis
here, 'tis here. I have seen the time, with my long
sword I would have made you four tall fellows skip like rats.

HOST

Here, boys, here, here! shall we wag?

GEORGE PAGE

Tomorrow morn. I would rather hear them scold than fight.

[Exeunt HOST, SHALLOW, and GEORGE PAGE]

FRANCIS FORD

Though Page be a secure fool, an stands so firmly
on his wife's frailty, yet I cannot put off my
opinion so easily: she was in his company at Page's
house; and what they made there, I know not. Well,
I will look further into't: and I have a disguise
to sound Falstaff. If I find her honest, I lose not
my labour; if she be otherwise, 'tis labour well bestowed.

[Exit]

ACT II. SCENE 2.
A room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF and PISTOL]

FALSTAFF

I will not lend thee a penny.

PISTOL

I will retort the sum in equipage.

FALSTAFF

Not a penny. I have been content, sir, you should lay my countenance to pawn; I have grated upon my good friends for three reprieves for you and your coach-fellow Nym; or else you had looked through the grate, like a gemini of baboons. I am damned in hell for swearing to gentlemen my friends, you were good soldiers and tall fellows; and when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I took't upon mine honour thou hadst it not.

PISTOL

Didst not thou share? hadst thou not fifteen pence?

FALSTAFF

Reason, you rogue, reason: thinkest thou I'll endanger my soul for free? At a word, hang no more about me, I am no gibbet for you. Go. A short knife and a throng! To your manor of Pickt-hatch! Go. You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! you stand upon your honour! Why, thou unconfined baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the terms of my honour precise: I, I, I myself sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge and to lurch; and yet you, rogue, will ensconce your rags, your cat-a-mountain looks, your red-lattice phrases, and your bold-beating oaths, under the shelter of your honour? You will not do it, you!

PISTOL

Why, then the world's mine oyster.
Which I with sword will open.
(...)

[Exit PISTOL]

[Enter ROBIN]

ROBIN

Sir, here's a woman would speak with you.

FALSTAFF

Let her approach.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Give your worship good morrow.

FALSTAFF

Good morrow, good wife.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Not so, an't please your worship.

FALSTAFF

Good maid, then.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

That I am, I'll be sworn,
As my mother was, the first hour I was born.

FALSTAFF

I do believe the swearer. What with me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Shall I vouchsafe your worship a word or two?

FALSTAFF

Two thousand, fair woman: and I'll vouchsafe thee
the hearing.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

There is one Mistress Ford, sir:—I pray, come a
little nearer this ways:—I myself dwell with master
Doctor Caius,—

FALSTAFF

Well, on: Mistress Ford, you say,—

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Your worship says very true: I pray your worship,
come a little nearer this ways.

FALSTAFF

I warrant thee, nobody hears; mine own people, mine
own people.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Are they so? God bless them and make them his servants!

FALSTAFF

Well, Mistress Ford; what of her?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Why, sir, she's a good creature. Lord Lord! your
worship's a wanton! Well, heaven forgive you and all
of us, I pray!

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford; come, Mistress Ford,—

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Marry, this is the short and the long of it; you
have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis
wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the
court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her
to such a canary. Yet there has been knights, and
lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches, I warrant
you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift
after gift; smelling so sweetly, all musk, and so
rushling, I warrant you, in silk and gold; and in
such alligant terms; and in such wine and sugar of
the best and the fairest, that would have won any
woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never
get an eye-wink of her: I had myself twenty angels
given me this morning; but I defy all angels, in
any such sort, as they say, but in the way of
honesty: and, I warrant you, they could never get
her so much as sip on a cup with the proudest of
them all: and yet there has been earls, nay, which
is more, pensioners; but, I warrant you, all is one with her.

FALSTAFF

But what says she to me? be brief, my good
she-Mercury.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Marry, she hath received your letter, for the which she thanks you a thousand times; and she gives you to notify that her husband will be absence from his house between ten and eleven.

FALSTAFF

Ten and eleven?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Ay, forsooth; and then you may come and see the picture, she says, that you wot of: Master Ford, her husband, will be from home. Alas! the sweet woman leads an ill life with him: he's a very jealousy man: she leads a very frampold life with him, good heart.

FALSTAFF

Ten and eleven. Woman, commend me to her; I will not fail her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Why, you say well. But I have another messenger to your worship. Mistress Page hath her hearty commendations to you too: and let me tell you in your ear, she's as fartuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss you morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor, whoe'er be the other: and she bade me tell your worship that her husband is seldom from home; but she hopes there will come a time. I never knew a woman so dote upon a man: surely I think you have charms, la; yes, in truth.

FALSTAFF

Not I, I assure thee: setting the attractions of my good parts aside I have no other charms.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Blessing on your heart for't!

FALSTAFF

But, I pray thee, tell me this: has Ford's wife and Page's wife acquainted each other how they love me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Oh God, no sir! That were a jest indeed! They have not so little grace, I hope: that were a trick indeed! But Mistress Page would desire you to send her your little page, of all loves: her husband has a marvellous infection to the little page; and truly Master Page is an honest man. Never a wife in Windsor leads a better life than she does: do what she will, say what she will, take all, pay all, go to bed when she list, rise when she list, all is as she will: and truly she deserves it; for if there be a kind woman in Windsor, she is one. You must send her your page; no remedy.

FALSTAFF

Why, I will.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Nay, but do so, then: and, look you, he may come and go between you both; and in any case have a nay-word, that you may know one another's mind, and the boy never need to understand any thing; for 'tis not good that children should know any wickedness: old folks, you know, have discretion, as they say, and know the world.

FALSTAFF

Fare thee well: commend me to them both: there's my purse; I am yet thy debtor. Boy, go along with this woman.

[Exeunt MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN]

(...)

Sayest thou so, old Jack? go thy ways; I'll make more of thy old body than I have done. Will they yet look after thee? Wilt thou, after the expense of so much money, be now a gainer? Good body, I thank thee. Let them say 'tis grossly done; so it be fairly done, no matter.

[Enter BARDOLPH]

BARDOLPH

Sir John, there's one Master Brook below would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent your worship a morning's draught of sack.

FALSTAFF

Brook is his name?

BARDOLPH

Ay, sir.

FALSTAFF

Call him in.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflow such liquor. Ah, ha! Mistress Ford and Mistress Page have I encompassed you? go to; via!

[Re-enter BARDOLPH, with FRANCIS FORD disguised]

FRANCIS FORD

Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

FRANCIS FORD

I make bold to press with so little preparation upon you.

FALSTAFF

You're welcome. What's your will? Give us leave, drawer.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

FRANCIS FORD

Sir, I am a gentleman that have spent much; my name is Brook.

FALSTAFF

Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

FRANCIS FORD

Good Sir John, I sue for yours: not to charge you; for I must let you understand I think myself in better plight for a lender than you are: the which hath something embolden'd me to this unseasoned intrusion; for they say, if money go before, all ways do lie open.

FALSTAFF

Money is a good soldier, sir, and will on.

FRANCIS FORD

Troth, and I have a bag of money here troubles me:
if you will help to bear it, Sir John, take all, or
half, for easing me of the carriage.

FALSTAFF

Sir, I know not how I may deserve to be your porter.
(...)

FRANCIS FORD

Sir, I hear you are a scholar,—I will be brief
with you,—and you have been a man long known to me,
though I had never so good means, as desire, to make
myself acquainted with you. I shall discover a
thing to you, wherein I must very much lay open mine
own imperfection: but, good Sir John, as you have
one eye upon my follies, as you hear them unfolded,
turn another into the register of your own; that I
may pass with a reproof the easier, sith you
yourself know how easy it is to be such an offender.

FALSTAFF

Very well, sir; proceed.

FRANCIS FORD

There is a gentlewoman in this town; her husband's
name is Ford.

FALSTAFF

Well, sir.

FRANCIS FORD

I have long loved her, and, I protest to you,
bestowed much on her; followed her with a dotting
observance; engrossed opportunities to meet her;
fee'd every slight occasion that could but grudgingly
give me sight of her; not only bought many presents
to give her, but have given largely to many to know
what she would have given; briefly, I have pursued
her as love hath pursued me; which hath been on the
wing of all occasions. But whatsoever I have
merited, either in my mind or, in my means,
recompense I have received none; unless experience

be a jewel that I have purchased at an infinite rate, and that hath taught me to say this:
“Love like a shadow flies when substance love pursues;
Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues.”

FALSTAFF

Have you received no promise of satisfaction at her hands?

FRANCIS FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

FRANCIS FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

Of what quality was your love, then?

FRANCIS FORD

Like a fair house built on another man's ground; so that I have lost my edifice by mistaking the place where I erected it.

FALSTAFF

To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

FRANCIS FORD

When I have told you that, I have told you all. Some say, that though she appear honest to me, yet in other places she enlargeth her mirth so far that there is shrewd construction made of her. Now, Sir John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable discourse, of great admittance, authentic in your place and person, generally allowed for your many war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.

FALSTAFF

O, sir!

FRANCIS FORD

Believe it, for you know it. There is money; spend it, spend it; spend more; spend all I have; only give me so much of your time in exchange of it, as

to lay an amiable siege to the honesty of this
Ford's wife: use your art of wooing; win her to
consent to you: if any man may, you may as soon as
any.

FALSTAFF

Would it apply well to the vehemency of your
affection, that I should win what you would enjoy?
Methinks you prescribe to yourself very preposterously.

FRANCIS FORD

O, understand my drift. She dwells so securely on
the excellency of her honour, that the folly of my
soul dares not present itself: she is too bright to
be looked against. Now, could I could come to her
with any detection in my hand, my desires had
instance and argument to commend themselves: I
could drive her then from the ward of her purity,
her reputation, her marriage-vow, and a thousand
other her defences, which now are too too strongly
embattled against me. What say you to't, Sir John?

FALSTAFF

Master Brook, I will first make bold with your
money; next, give me your hand; and last, as I am a
gentleman, you shall, if you will, enjoy Ford's wife.

FRANCIS FORD

O good sir!

FALSTAFF

I say you shall.

FRANCIS FORD

Want no money, Sir John; you shall want none.

FALSTAFF

Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook; you shall want
none. I shall be with her, I may tell you, by her
own appointment; even as you came in to me, her
assistant or go-between parted from me: I say I
shall be with her between ten and eleven; for at
that time the jealous rascally knave her husband
will be forth. Come you to me at night; you shall
know how I speed.

FRANCIS FORD

I am blest in your acquaintance. Do you know Ford, sir?

FALSTAFF

Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not: yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the jealous wittolly knave hath masses of money; for the which his wife seems to me well-favored. I will use her as the key of the cuckoldly rogue's coffer; and there's my harvest-home.

FRANCIS FORD

I would you knew Ford, sir, that you might avoid him if you saw him.

FALSTAFF

Hang him, mechanical salt-butter rogue! I will stare him out of his wits; I will awe him with my cudgel: it shall hang like a meteor o'er the cuckold's horns. Master Brook, thou shalt know I will predominate over the peasant, and thou shalt lie with his wife. Come to me soon at night. Ford's a knave, and I will aggravate his style; thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and cuckold. Come to me soon at night.

[Exit]

FRANCIS FORD

What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is ready to crack with impatience. Who says this is improvident jealousy? my wife hath sent to him; the hour is fixed; the match is made. Would any man have thought this? See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not only receive this villanous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends: but Cuckold! Wittol!—Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh

Act II. Scene 2.

the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my
aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling
gelding, than my wife with herself; then she plots,
then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they
think in their hearts they may effect, they will
break their hearts but they will effect. God be
praised for my jealousy! Eleven o'clock the hour.
I will prevent this, detect my wife, be revenged on
Falstaff, and laugh at Page. I will about it;
better three hours too soon than a minute too late.
Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!

[Exit]

Act II. Scene 3.
ACT II. SCENE 3.
A Field Near Windsor.

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY]

DOCTOR CAIUS

Jack Rugby!

RUGBY

Sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vat is de clock, Jack?

RUGBY

‘Tis past the hour, sir, that Sir Hugh promised to meet.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, he has save his soul, dat he is no come; he has pray his Pible well, dat he is no come: by gar, Jack Rugby, he is dead already, if he be come.

RUGBY

He is wise, sir; he knew your worship would kill him, if he came.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, de herring is no dead so as I vill kill him. Take your rapier, Jack; I vill tell you how I vill kill him.

RUGBY

Alas, sir, I cannot fence.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Villany, take your rapier.

[RUGBY takes rapier and begins to pray]

Rugby!

RUGBY

Forbear; here’s company.

[Enter HOST, SHALLOW, SLENDER, and GEORGE PAGE]

HOST

Bless thee, bully doctor!

SHALLOW

Save you, Master Doctor Caius!

GEORGE PAGE

Now, good master doctor!

SLENDER

Give you good morrow, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vat be all you, one, two, tree, four, come for?

HOST

To see thee fight, to see thee foin, to see thee
traverse; to see thee here, to see thee there; to
see thee pass thy punto, thy stock, thy reverse, thy
distance, thy montant. Is he dead, my Ethiopian? is
he dead, my *François*? Ha, bully! What says my
Esculapius? my Galen? My heart of elder? Ha!
Is he dead, bully stale? Is he dead?

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, he is de coward Jack priest of de vorld; he
is not show his face.

HOST

Thou art a castalion king urinal, Hector of Greece, my boy!

DOCTOR CAIUS

I pray you, bear vitness that me have stay six or
seven – or two or tree – hours for him, and he is no come.

SHALLOW

He is the wiser man, master doctor: he is a curer of
souls, and you a curer of bodies; if you should
fight, you go against the hair of your professions.
Is it not true, Master Page?

GEORGE PAGE

Master Shallow, you have yourself been a great
fighter, though now a man of peace.

SHALLOW

Bodykins, Master Page, though I now be old and of the peace, if I see a sword out, my finger itches to make one. Though we are justices and doctors and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us; we are the sons of women, Master Page.

GEORGE PAGE

'Tis true, Master Shallow.

SHALLOW

It will be found so, Master Page. Master Doctor Caius, I am come to fetch you home. I am sworn of the peace: you have showed yourself a wise physician, and Sir Hugh hath shown himself a wise and patient churchman. You must go with me, master doctor.

HOST

Pardon, **bully** justice. A word, Monsieur Butthead.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Butt-head! vat is dat?

HOST

Butt-head, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, den, I have as mush butt-head as de Englishman. Scurvy jack-dog priest! by gar, me vill cut his ears.

HOST

He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Clapper-de-claw! vat is dat?

HOST

That is, he will make thee amends.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, me do look he shall clapper-de-claw me; for, by gar, me vill have it.

HOST

And I will provoke him to't, or let him wag.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Me tank you for dat.

HOST

And, moreover, bully— but first, Master [Shallow](#), and Master Page, and eke Cavaleiro Slender, go you through the town to Frogmore.

GEORGE PAGE

[Aside to Host] Sir Hugh is there, is he?

HOST

[Aside to Page] He is there: see what humour he is in; and I will bring the doctor about by the fields. Will it do well?

SHALLOW

[Aside to Host] We will do it.

GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, SLENDER

Adieu, good master doctor.

[Exeunt GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, me vill kill de priest; for he speak for a jackanape to Anne Page.

HOST

Let him die: sheathe thy impatience, throw cold water on thy choler: go about the fields with me through Frogmore: I will bring thee where Mistress Anne Page is, at a farm-house a-feasting; and thou shalt woo her. Cried game? Said I well?

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, me dank you for dat: by gar, I love you; and I shall procure-a you de good guest, de earl, de knight, de lords, de gentlemen, my patients.

HOST

For the which I will be thy adversary toward Anne Page. Said I well?

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, 'tis good; vell said.

HOST

Let us wag, then.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Come at my heels, Jack Rugby.

[Exeunt]

Act III. Scene 1.
ACT III. SCENE 1.
A Field Near Frogmore.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE]

SIR HUGH EVANS

I pray you now, good master Slender's serving-boy,
and friend Simple by your name, which way have you
looked for Master Caius, that calls himself doctor of physic?

SIMPLE

Marry, sir, the petty-ward, the park-ward, every
way; old Windsor way, and every way but the town
way.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I most feheemently desire you you will also look that
way.

SIMPLE

I will, sir.

[Exit]

SIR HUGH EVANS

Jeshu pless my soul, how full of cholers I am, and
trempling of mind! I shall be glad if he have
deceived me. How melancholies I am! I will knog
his urinals about his knave's costard when I have
good opportunities for the ork. 'Pless my soul!

[Sings] To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Malodorous birds sings madrigals;
There will we make our peds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies.
To shallow—

Mercy on me! I have a great dispositions to cry.

[Sings] Malodorous birds sing madrigals;
When as I sat in Pabylon;
And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow—

[Re-enter SIMPLE]

SIMPLE

Yonder he is coming, this way, Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

He's welcome.

[Sings] To shallow rivers, to whose falls—

Heaven prosper the right! What weapons is he?

SIMPLE

No weapons, sir. There comes my master, Master Shallow, and another gentleman, from Frogmore, over the stile, this way.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Pray you, give me my gown; or else keep it in your arms.

[Enter GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

SHALLOW

How now, master Parson! Good morrow, good Sir Hugh. Keep a gamester from the dice, and a good student from his book, and it is wonderful.

SLENDER

Ah, sweet Anne Page!

GEORGE PAGE

God save you, good Sir Hugh!

SIR HUGH EVANS

God pless you from his mercy sake, all of you!

SHALLOW

What, the sword and the word! do you study them both, master parson?

GEORGE PAGE

And youthful still! in your doublet and hose this raw rheumatic day!

SIR HUGH EVANS

There is reasons and causes for it.

GEORGE PAGE

We are come to you to do a good office, master parson.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Fery well: what is it?

GEORGE PAGE

Yonder is a most reverend gentleman, who, belike having received wrong by some person, is at most odds with his own gravity and patience that ever you saw.

SHALLOW

I have lived fourscore years and upward; I never heard a man of his place, gravity, and learning, so wide of his own respect.

SIR HUGH EVANS

What is he?

GEORGE PAGE

I think you know him; Master Doctor Caius, the renowned French physician.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Got's will, and his passion of my heart! I had as lief you would tell me of a mess of porridge.

GEORGE PAGE

Why?

SIR HUGH EVANS

He has no more knowledge in Hibocrates and Galen, –and he is a knave besides; a cowardly knave as you would desires to be acquainted withal.

GEORGE PAGE

I warrant you, he's the man should fight with him.

SLENDER

O sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW

It appears so by his weapons. Keep them asunder: here comes Doctor Caius.

[Enter HOST, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY]

GEORGE PAGE

Nay, good master parson, keep in your weapon.

SHALLOW

So do you, good master doctor.

[They fight]

HOST

Disarm them, and let them question: let them keep their limbs whole and hack our English.

DOCTOR CAIUS

I pray you, let-a me speak a word with your ear.
Wherefore vill you not meet-a me?

[EVANS reacts speechlessly] (...)

By gar, you are de coward, de Jack dog, John ape.

SIR HUGH EVANS

[Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS] Pray you let us not be laughing-stocks to other men's humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will one way or other make you amends.

[Whispers to CAIUS]

[Aloud]

I will knog your urinals about your knave's cockscomb for missing your meetings and appointments.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Diable! Jack Rugby – mine host de Jarteer – have I not stay for him to kill him? have I not, at de place I did appoint?

SIR HUGH EVANS

As I am a Christians soul now, look you, this is the place appointed: I'll be judgement by mine host of the Garter.

HOST

Peace, I say, Gallia and Gaul, Welsh and French, soul-curer and body-curer!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

HOST

Peace, I say! hear mine host of the Garter. Am I politic? am I subtle? am I a Machiavel? Shall I lose my doctor? no; he gives me the potions and the motions. Shall I lose my parson, my priest, my Sir Hugh? no; he gives me the proverbs and the no-verbs. Give me thy hand, terrestrial; so. Give me thy hand, celestial; so. Boys of art, I have deceived you both; I have directed you to wrong places: your hearts are mighty, your skins are whole, and let burnt sack be the issue. Come, lay their swords to pawn. Follow me, lads of peace; follow, follow, follow.

SHALLOW

Afore God, a mad host. Follow, gentlemen, follow.

SLENDER

O sweet Anne Page!

[Exeunt SHALLOW, SLENDER, GEORGE PAGE, and HOST]

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ha, do I perceive dat? have you make-a de sot of us, ha, ha?

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is well; he has made us his vlouting-stog. I desire you that we may be friends; and let us knog our prains together to be revenge on this same scall, scurvey cogging companion, the host of the Garter.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, with all my heart. He promise to bring me where is Anne Page; by gar, he deceive me too.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Well, I will smite his noodles. Pray you, follow.

[Exeunt]

Act III. Scene 2.
ACT III. SCENE 2.
A Street.

[Enter MARGARET PAGE, ROBIN, and FRANCIS FORD]

(...)

FRANCIS FORD

Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

MARGARET PAGE

Truly, sir, to see your wife. Is she at home?

FRANCIS FORD

Ay; and as idle as she may hang together, for want of company. I think, if your husbands were dead, you two would marry.

MARGARET PAGE

Be sure of that— two other husbands.

FRANCIS FORD

Where had you this pretty weather-cock?

MARGARET PAGE

I cannot tell what the dickens his name is my husband had him of. What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

ROBIN

Sir John Falstaff.

FRANCIS FORD

Sir John Falstaff!

MARGARET PAGE

He, he; I can never hit on's name. There is such a league between my good man and he! Is your wife at home indeed?

FRANCIS FORD

Indeed she is.

MARGARET PAGE

By your leave, sir: I am sick till I see her.

[Exeunt MARGARET PAGE and ROBIN]

FRANCIS FORD

Has Page any brains? hath he any eyes? hath he any thinking? Sure, they sleep; he hath no use of them. Why, this boy will carry a letter twenty mile, as easy as a cannon will shoot point-blank twelve score. He pieces out his wife's inclination; he gives her folly motion and advantage: and now she's going to my wife, and Falstaff's boy with her. A man may hear this shower sing in the wind. And Falstaff's boy with her! Good plots, they are laid; and our revolted wives share damnation together. Well; I will take him, then torture my wife, pluck the borrowed veil of modesty from the so seeming Mistress Page, divulge Page himself for a secure and wilful Actaeon; and to these violent proceedings all my neighbours shall cry aim.

[Clock Strikes 10 1/2 times]

Ten thirty!

The clock gives me my cue, and my assurance bids me search: there I shall find Falstaff: I shall be rather praised for this than mocked; for it is as positive as the earth is firm that Falstaff is there: I will go.

[Enter GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, SLENDER, HOST, SIR HUGH EVANS, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY]

SHALLOW, PAGE, SLENDER, HOST, EVANS, CAIUS

Well met, Master Ford.

FRANCIS FORD

Trust me, a good knot: I have good cheer at home; and I pray you all go with me.

SHALLOW

I must excuse myself, Master Ford.

SLENDER

And so must I, sir: we have appointed to dine with Mistress Anne, and I would not break with her for more money than I'll speak of.

SHALLOW

We have lingered about a match between Anne Page and my cousin Slender, and this day we shall have our answer.

SLENDER

I hope I have your good will, father Page.

GEORGE PAGE

You have, Master Slender; I stand wholly for you:
but my wife, master doctor, is for you altogether.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ay, be-gar; and de maid is love-a me: my nursh-a
Quickly tell me so mush.

HOST

What say you to young Master Fenton? he capers, he
dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he
speaks holiday, he smells April and May: he will
carry't, he will carry't; 'tis in his buttons; he
will carry't.

GEORGE PAGE

Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is
of no having: he kept company with the wild prince
and Poins; he is of too high a region; he knows too
much. No, he shall not knit a knot in his fortunes
with the finger of my substance: if he take her,
let him take her simply; the wealth I have waits on
my consent, and my consent goes not that way.

FRANCIS FORD

I beseech you heartily, some of you go home with me
to lunch: besides your cheer, you shall have
sport; I will show you a monster. Master doctor,
you shall go; so shall you, Master Page; and you, Sir Hugh.

SHALLOW

Well, fare you well: *[Aside]* we shall have the freer wooing
at Master Page's.

[Exeunt SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

(...)

HOST

Farewell, my hearts: I will to my honest knight
Falstaff, and drink canary with him.

[Exit]

FRANCIS FORD

[Aside] I think I shall drink in pipe wine first
with him; I'll make him dance. Will you go, gentles?

GEORGE PAGE

Have with you to see this monster.

[Exeunt]

Act III. Scene 3.
Act III. SCENE 3.
A Room in FORD'S House.

[Enter ALICE FORD and MARGARET PAGE]

ALICE FORD

What, Jane! What, Robert!

MARGARET PAGE

Quickly, quickly! is the buck-basket—

ALICE FORD

I warrant. What, Robert, I say!

[Enter Servants with a basket]

MARGARET PAGE

Come, come, come.

ALICE FORD

Here, set it down.

MARGARET PAGE

Give your people the charge; we must be brief.

ALICE FORD

Marry, as I told you before, Jane and Robert, be ready here hard by in the brew-house: and when I suddenly call you, come forth, and without any pause or staggering take this basket on your shoulders: that done, trudge with it in all haste, and carry it among the whitsters in Datchet-mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch close by the Thames side.

MARGARET PAGE

You will do it?

ALICE FORD

I ha' told them over and over; they lack no direction. Be gone, and come when you are called.

[Exeunt Servants]

MARGARET PAGE

Here comes little Robin.

[Enter ROBIN]

ALICE FORD

How now, my eyas-musket! what news with you?

ROBIN

My master, Sir John, is come in at your back-door, Mistress Ford, and requests your company.

MARGARET PAGE

You little Jack-a-Lent, have you been true to us?

ROBIN

Ay, I'll be sworn. My master knows not of your being here and hath threatened to put me into everlasting liberty if I tell you of it; for he swears he'll turn me away.

MARGARET PAGE

Thou'rt a good boy: this secrecy of thine shall be a tailor to thee and shall make thee a new doublet and hose. I'll go hide me.

ALICE FORD

Do so. Go tell thy master I am alone.

[Exit ROBIN]

Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

MARGARET PAGE

I warrant thee; if I do not act it, hiss me.

[Exit]

ALICE FORD

Go to, then: we'll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpion; we'll teach him to know turtles from jays.

[Enter FALSTAFF]

FALSTAFF

Have I caught thee, my heavenly jewel? Why, now let me die, for I have lived long enough: this is the period of my ambition: O this blessed hour!

ALICE FORD

O sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, I cannot cog, I cannot prate,
Mistress Ford. Now shall I sin in my wish: I would
thy husband were dead: I'll speak it before the
best lord; I would make thee my lady.

ALICE FORD

I your lady, Sir John! alas, I should be a pitiful lady!

FALSTAFF

Let the court of France show me such another. I see
how thine eye would emulate the diamond: thou hast
the right arched beauty of the brow that becomes the
shapely-attire, the attire-valiant, or any attire of
Venetian admittance.

ALICE FORD

A plain kerchief, Sir John: my brows become nothing
else; nor that well neither.

FALSTAFF

By the Lord, thou art "atire-ant" to say so: thou
wouldst make an absolute courtier; and the firm
fixture of thy foot would give an excellent motion
to thy gait in a semi-circled farthingale. I see
what thou wert if "Fortune Thy Foe" were not "Nature
Thy Friend." Come, thou canst not hide it.

ALICE FORD

Believe me, there is no such thing in me.

FALSTAFF

What made me love thee? Let that persuade thee
there's something extraordinary in thee. Come, I
cannot cog and say thou art this and that, like a
many of these lispings hawthorn-buds, that come like
women in men's apparel, and smell like Bucklersbury
in simple time; I cannot. But I love thee. None
but thee. And thou deservest it.

ALICE FORD

Do not betray me, sir. I fear you love Mistress Page.

FALSTAFF

Thou mightst as well say I love to walk by the sewer-gate, which is as hateful to me as the reek of a lime-kiln.

ALICE FORD

Well, heaven knows how I love you; and you shall one day find it.

FALSTAFF

Keep in that mind; I'll deserve it.

ALICE FORD

Nay, I must tell you, so you do; or else I could not be in that mind.

[Enter ROBIN]

ROBIN

Mistress Ford, Mistress Ford! here's Mistress Page at the door, sweating and blowing and looking wildly, and would needs speak with you presently.

FALSTAFF

She shall not see me: I will ensconce me behind the arras.

ALICE FORD

Pray you, do so: she's a very tattling woman.

[FALSTAFF hides himself]

[Re-enter MARGARET PAGE]

What's the matter? how now!

MARGARET PAGE

O Mistress Ford, what have you done? You're shamed, you're overthrown, you're undone for ever!

ALICE FORD

What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MARGARET PAGE

O well-a-day, Mistress Ford! having an honest man to your husband, to give him such cause of suspicion!

ALICE FORD

What cause of suspicion?

MARGARET PAGE

What cause of suspicion! Out upon you! how am I
mistook in you!

ALICE FORD

Speak louder. Why, alas, what's the matter?

MARGARET PAGE

Your husband's coming hither, woman, with all the
officers in Windsor, to search for a gentleman that
he says is here now in the house by your consent, to
take an ill advantage of his absence: you are undone.

ALICE FORD

'Tis not so, I hope.

MARGARET PAGE

Pray heaven it be not so, that you have such a man
here! But 'tis most certain your husband's coming,
with half Windsor at his heels, to search for such a
one. I come before to tell you. If you know
yourself clear, why, I am glad of it; but if you
have a friend here convey, convey him out. Be not
amazed; call all your senses to you; defend your
reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

ALICE FORD

What shall I do? There is a gentleman my dear
friend; and I fear not mine own shame so much as his
peril: I had rather than a thousand pound he were
out of the house.

MARGARET PAGE

For shame! never stand "you had rather" and "you
had rather:" your husband's here at hand, bethink
you of some conveyance: in the house you cannot
hide him. O, how have you deceived me! Look, here
is a basket: if he be of any reasonable stature, he
may creep in here; and throw foul linen upon him, as
if it were going to bucking: or—it is whiteing-time
—send him by your two servants to Datchet-mead.

ALICE FORD

He's too big to go in there. What shall I do?

FALSTAFF

[*Coming forward*] Let me see't, let me see't, O, let me see't! I'll in, I'll in. Follow your friend's counsel. I'll in.

MARGARET PAGE

What, Sir John Falstaff! Are these your letters, knight?

FALSTAFF

I love thee. **None but thee.** Help me away. Let me creep in here. I'll never come here more.

[*Gets into the basket; they cover him with foul linen*]

MARGARET PAGE

Help to cover your master, boy. Call your servants, Mistress Ford. You dissembling knight!

ALICE FORD

What, Jane! Robert! Jane!

[*Exit ROBIN*]

[*Re-enter Servants*]

Go take up these clothes here quickly. Where's the cowl-staff? look, how you drumble! Carry them to the laundress in Datchet-mead; quickly, come.

[*Enter FRANCIS FORD, GEORGE PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, RUGBY, and SIR HUGH EVANS*]

FRANCIS FORD

Pray you, come near: if I suspect without cause, why then make sport at me; then let me be your jest; I deserve it –

[*ROBERT & JANE pick up buck basket and then drop it because it is so heavy*]

FALSTAFF

Ahhh!

[*FRANCIS FORD starts to look in basket*]

ALICE FORD

Choo!

SIR HUGH EVANS

Pless you.

FRANCIS FORD

How now! whither bear you this?

ROBERT

To the laundress, forsooth.

ALICE FORD

Why, what have you to do whither they bear it? You were best meddle with buck-washing?

FRANCIS FORD

Buck! I would I could wash myself of the buck!
Buck, buck, buck! Ay, buck; I warrant you, buck;
and of the season too, it shall appear.

[Exeunt Servants with the basket]

Gentlemen, I have dreamed to-night; I'll tell you my dream. Here, here, here be my keys: ascend my chambers; search, seek, find out: I'll warrant we'll unkennel the fox. Let me stop this way first.

[Locking the door]

So, now escape!.

GEORGE PAGE

Good Master Ford, be contented: you wrong yourself too much.

FRANCIS FORD

True, Master Page. Up, gentlemen: you shall see sport anon: follow me, gentlemen.

[Exit]

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, 'tis no the fashion of France; it is not jealous in France.

GEORGE PAGE

Nay, follow him, gentlemen; see the issue of his search.

[Exeunt GEORGE PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

MARGARET PAGE

Is there not a double excellency in this?

ALICE FORD

I know not which pleases me better, that my husband is deceived, or Sir John.

MARGARET PAGE

What a taking was he in when your husband asked what was in the basket!

ALICE FORD

I am half afraid he will have need of washing; so throwing him into the water will do him a benefit.

MARGARET PAGE

Hang him, dishonest rascal! I would all of the same strain were in the same distress.

ALICE FORD

I think my husband hath some special suspicion of Falstaff's being here; for I never saw him so gross in his jealousy till now.

MARGARET PAGE

I will lay a plot to try that; and we will yet have more tricks with Falstaff: his dissolute disease will scarce obey this medicine.

ALICE FORD

Shall we send that foolish carrion, Mistress Quickly, to him, and excuse his throwing into the water; and give him another hope, to betray him to another punishment?

MARGARET PAGE

We will do it: let him be sent for to-morrow, eight o'clock, to have amends.

[Re-enter FRANCIS FORD, GEORGE PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, RUGBY, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

FRANCIS FORD

I cannot find him: may be the knave bragged of that he could not compass.

MARGARET PAGE

[Aside to ALICE FORD] Heard you that?

ALICE FORD

You use me well, Master Ford, do you?

FRANCIS FORD

Ay, I do so.

ALICE FORD

Heaven make you better than your thoughts!

FRANCIS FORD

Amen!

MARGARET PAGE

You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.

FRANCIS FORD

Ay, ay; I must bear it.

SIR HUGH EVANS

If there be any pody in the house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses, heaven forgive my sins at the day of judgment!

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, nor I too: there is no bodies.

GEORGE PAGE

Fie, fie, Master Ford! are you not ashamed? What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination? I would not have your distemper in this kind for the wealth of Windsor Castle.

FRANCIS FORD

'Tis my fault, Master Page: I suffer for it.

SIR HUGH EVANS

You suffer for a pad conscience: your wife is as honest a 'omans as I will desires among five thousand, and five hundred too.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, I see 'tis an honest woman.

FRANCIS FORD

Well, I promised you a lunch. Come, come, walk in the Park: I pray you, pardon me; I will hereafter make known to you why I have done this. Come, wife; come, Mistress Page. I pray you, pardon me; pray heartily, pardon me.

GEORGE PAGE

Let's go in, gentlemen; but, trust me, we'll mock him. I do invite you to-morrow morning to my house to breakfast: after, we'll a-birding together; I have a fine hawk for the bush. Shall it be so?

FRANCIS FORD

Anything.

SIR HUGH EVANS

If there is one, I shall make two in the company.

DOCTOR CAIUS

If dere be one or two, I shall make-a the turd.

FRANCIS FORD

Pray you, go, Master Page.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I pray you now, remembrance tomorrow on the lousy knave, mine host.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Dat is good; by gar, with all my heart!

SIR HUGH EVANS

A lousy knave, to have his gibes and his mockeries!

[Exeunt]

Act III. Scene 4.
ACT III. SCENE 4.
A Room in PAGE's House.

[Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE]

FENTON

Tell me sweet Nan, how dost thou yet resolve?
Shall foolish Slender have thee to his wife?
Or one as wise as he, the learned Doctor?
Shall such as they enjoy thy maiden heart?
Thou knowest that I have always loved thee dear,
and thou hast oft times swore the like to me.

ANNE PAGE

Good Master Fenton, you may assure yourself
my heart is settled upon none but you.
'Tis as my father and mother please:
Get their consent, you quickly shall have mine.

FENTON

I see I cannot get thy father's love;
Therefore no more turn me to him, sweet Nan.

ANNE PAGE

Alas, how then?

FENTON

Why, thou must be thyself.
He doth object I am too great of birth—,
And that, my state being gall'd with my expense,
I seek to heal it only by his wealth:
Besides these, other bars he lays before me,
My riots past, my wild societies;
And tells me 'tis a thing impossible
I should love thee but as a property.

ANNE PAGE

May be he tells you true.

FENTON

No, heaven so speed me in my time to come!
Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth
Was the first motive that I woo'd thee, Anne:
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value
Than stamps in gold or sums in sealed bags;
And 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

ANNE PAGE

Gentle Master Fenton,
Yet seek my father's love; still seek it, sir:
If opportunity and humblest suit
Cannot attain it, why, then,—hark you hither!

[They converse apart]

[Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and MISTRESS QUICKLY]

SHALLOW

Break their talk, Mistress Quickly: my kinsman shall
speak for himself.

SLENDER

I'll make a shaft or a bolt on't: 'slid, 'tis but
venturing.

SHALLOW

Be not dismayed.

SLENDER

No, she shall not dismay me: I care not for that,
but that I am afeard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Hark ye; Master Slender would speak a word with you.

ANNE PAGE

I come to him.

[Aside]

This is my father's choice.
O, what a world of vile ill-favor'd faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a-year!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And how does good Master Fenton? Pray you, a word with you.

SHALLOW

She's coming; to her, coz. O boy, thou hadst a father!

SLENDER

I had a father, Mistress Anne; my uncle can tell you
good jests of him. Pray you, uncle, tell Mistress
Anne the jest, how my father stole two geese out of
a pen, good uncle.

SHALLOW

Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you.

SLENDER

Ay, that I do; as well as I love any woman in Gloucestershire.

SHALLOW

He will maintain you like a gentlewoman.

SLENDER

Ay, that I will, come cut and long-tail, under the degree of a squire.

SHALLOW

He will make you a hundred and fifty pounds jointure.

ANNE PAGE

Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

SHALLOW

Marry, I thank you for it; I thank you for that good comfort. She calls you, coz: I'll leave you.

ANNE PAGE

Now, Master Slender,—

SLENDER

Now, good Mistress Anne,—

ANNE PAGE

What is your will?

SLENDER

My will! 'od's heartlings, that's a pretty jest indeed! I ne'er made my will yet, I thank heaven; I am not such a sickly creature, I give heaven praise.

ANNE PAGE

I mean, Master Slender, what would you with me?

SLENDER

Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my uncle hath made motions: if it be my luck, so; if not, happy man be his dole! They can tell you how things go better than I can: you may ask your father; here he comes.

[Enter GEORGE PAGE and MARGARET PAGE]

GEORGE PAGE

Now, Master Slender: love him, daughter Anne.
Why, how now! what does Master Fenton here?
You wrong me, sir, thus still to haunt my house:
I told you, sir, my daughter is disposed of.

FENTON

Nay, Master Page, be not impatient.

MARGARET PAGE

Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

GEORGE PAGE

She is no match for you.

FENTON

Sir, will you hear me?

GEORGE PAGE

No, good Master Fenton.
Come, Master Shallow; come, son Slender, in.
Knowing my mind, you wrong me, Master Fenton.

[Exeunt GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Speak to Mistress Page.

FENTON

Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter
In such a righteous fashion as I do,
Perforce, against all cheques, rebukes and manners,
I must advance the colours of my love
And not retire: let me have your good will.

ANNE PAGE

Good mother, do not marry me to yond fool.

MARGARET PAGE

I mean it not; I seek you a better husband.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

That's my master, master doctor.

ANNE PAGE

Alas, I had rather be set quick i' the earth
And bowl'd to death with turnips!

MARGARET PAGE

Come, trouble not yourself. Good Master Fenton,
I will not be your friend nor enemy:
My daughter will I question how she loves you,
And as I find her, so am I affected.
Till then farewell, sir: she must needs go in;
Her father will be angry.

FENTON

Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

[Exeunt MARGARET PAGE and ANNE PAGE]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

This is my doing, now: "Nay," said I, "will you cast
away your child on a fool, and a physician? Look on
Master Fenton:" this is my doing.

FENTON

I thank thee; and I pray thee, once to-night
Give my sweet Nan this ring: there's for thy pains.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Now heaven send thee good fortune!

[Exit FENTON]

A kind heart he hath: a woman would run through
fire and water for such a kind heart. But yet I
would my master had Mistress Anne; or I would
Master Slender had her; or, in sooth, I would Master
Fenton had her; I will do what I can for them all
three; for so I have promised, and I'll be as good
as my word; but speciously for Master Fenton. Well,
I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from
my two mistresses: what a beast am I to slack it!

[Exit]

Act III. Scene 5.
ACT III. SCENE 5.
A Room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH]

FALSTAFF

Bardolph, I say!

BARDOLPH

Here, sir.

FALSTAFF

Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in't.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the Thames? Well, if I be served such another trick, I'll have my brains ta'en out and buttered, and give them to a dog for a new-year's gift. The rogues slighted me into the river with as little remorse as they would have drowned a blind bitch's puppies, fifteen i' the litter: and you may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; if the bottom were as deep as hell, I should down. I had been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and shallow,—a death that I abhor; for the water swells a man; and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled! I should have been a mountain of mummy.

[Re-enter BARDOLPH with sack]

BARDOLPH

Here's Mistress Quickly, sir, to speak with you.

FALSTAFF

Let me pour in some sack to the Thames water; for my belly's as cold as if I had swallowed snowballs for pills to cool the reins. Call her in.

BARDOLPH

Come in, woman!

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

MISTRESS QUICKLY

By your leave; I cry you mercy: give your worship good morrow.

FALSTAFF

Take away these chalices. Go brew me a pottle of sack finely.

BARDOLPH

With eggs, sir?

FALSTAFF

Simple of itself; I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage.

[Exit BARDOLPH]

How now!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Marry, sir, I come to your worship from Mistress Ford.

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was thrown into the ford; I have my belly full of ford.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Alas the day! good heart, that was not her fault: she does so scold her men; they mistook their 'irection.

FALSTAFF

So did I mine, to build upon a foolish woman's promise.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, she laments, sir, for it, that it would yearn your heart to see it. Her husband goes tomorrow morning a-birding; she desires you once more to come to her between nine and ten: I must carry her word quickly: she'll make you amends, I warrant you.

FALSTAFF

Well, I will visit her: tell her so; and bid her think what a man is: let her consider his frailty, and then judge of my merit.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I will tell her.

FALSTAFF

Do so. Between nine and ten, sayest thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Eight and nine, sir.

FALSTAFF

Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Peace be with you, sir.

[Exit]

(...)

[Enter FRANCIS FORD]

FRANCIS FORD

God save you, sir!

FALSTAFF

Now, master Brook, you come to know what hath passed between me and Ford's wife?

FRANCIS FORD

That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.

FALSTAFF

Master Brook, I will not lie to you: I was at her house the hour she appointed me.

FRANCIS FORD

And *how* sped you, sir?

FALSTAFF

Very ill-favoredly, Master Brook.

FRANCIS FORD

How so, sir? Did she change her determination?

FALSTAFF

No, Master Brook; but the peaking Cornuto her husband, Master Brook, dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy, comes me in the instant of our encounter, after we had embraced, kissed, protested, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy; and at his heels a rabble of his companions, thither provoked and instigated by his distemper, and, forsooth, to search his house for his wife's love.

FRANCIS FORD

What, while you were there?

FALSTAFF

While I was there.

FRANCIS FORD

And did he search for you, and could not find you?

FALSTAFF

You shall hear. As good luck would have it, comes in one Mistress Page; gives intelligence of Ford's approach; and, in her invention and Ford's wife's distraction, they conveyed me into a buck-basket.

FRANCIS FORD

A buck-basket!

FALSTAFF

By the Lord, a buck-basket! rammed me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins; that, Master Brook, there was the rankest compound of villanous smell that ever offended nostril.

FRANCIS FORD

And how long lay you there?

FALSTAFF

Nay, you shall hear, Master Brook, what I have suffered to bring this woman to evil for your good. Being thus crammed in the basket, a couple of Ford's knaves, his hinds, were called forth by their mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to Datchet-lane: they took me on their shoulders; met the jealous knave their master in the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket: I quaked for fear, lest the lunatic knave would have searched it; but fate, ordaining he should be a cuckold, held his hand. Well: on went he for a search, and away went I for foul clothes. But mark the sequel, Master Brook: I suffered the pangs of three several deaths; first, an intolerable fright, to be detected with a jealous rotten bell-wether; next, to be compassed, like a good bilbo, in the circumference of a peck, hilt to point, heel to head; and then, to be stopped in, like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease: think of that,—a man of my kidney,—think of that,—that am as subject

to heat as butter; a man of continual dissolution
and thaw: it was a miracle to scape suffocation.
And in the height of this bath, when I was more than
half stewed in grease, like a Dutch dish, to be
thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot,
in that surge, like a horse-shoe; think of
that,—hissing hot,—think of that, Master Brook.

FRANCIS FORD

In good sadness, I am sorry that for my sake you
have suffered all this. My suit then is desperate;
you'll undertake her no more?

FALSTAFF

Master Brook, I will be thrown into Etna, as I have
been into Thames, ere I will leave her thus. Her
husband is tomorrow morning gone a-birding: I have
received from her another embassy of meeting; 'twixt
eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

(...)

Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall
know how I speed; and the conclusion shall be
crowned with your enjoying her. Adieu. You shall
have her, Master Brook; Master Brook, you shall
cuckold Ford.

[Exit]

FRANCIS FORD

Hum! ha! is this a vision? is this a dream? do I
sleep? Master Ford awake! awake, Master Ford!
there's a hole made in your best coat, Master Ford.
This 'tis to be married! this 'tis to have linen
and buck-baskets! Well, I will proclaim myself
what I am: I will now take the lecher; he is at my
house; he cannot 'scape me; 'tis impossible he
should; he cannot creep into a halfpenny purse,
nor into a pepper-box: but, lest the devil that
guides him should aid him, I will search
impossible places. Though what I am I cannot avoid,
yet to be what I would not shall not make me tame:
if I have horns to make one mad, let the proverb go
with me: I'll be horn-mad.

[Exit]

Act IV. Scene 1.

ACT IV. SCENE 1.

The Same

(...)

*[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS, SIR HUGH EVANS, BARDOLPH, HOST
and CHORUS]*

CHORUS

*Now, as I come home, so drunk I couldn't see. Oh,
There I saw a horse where no horse should be. So,
I says unto me wife, "Tell this to me. Oh,
How come the horse where no horse should be?" Oh,
"You old fool, you silly fool. Can't you plainly see? Oh,
Nothing but a milk cow me mother sent to me." Oh,
Miles I have traveled, a thousand miles or more. Oh,
Saddle on a milk cow I've never seen before.*

*And as I come home, so drunk I couldn't see. Oh,
There I saw the boots where no boots should be. So,
I says unto me wife, "Tell this to me. Oh,
How come the boots where no boots should be?" Oh,
"You old fool, you silly fool. Can't you plainly see? Oh,
Nothing but a flower pot me mother sent to me." Oh,
Miles I have traveled, a thousand miles or more. Oh,
Laces on a flower pot I've never seen before.*

*And as I come home, so drunk I couldn't see. Oh,
There I saw a hat where no hat should be. So,
I says unto me wife, "Tell this to me. Oh,
How come the hat where no hat should be?" Oh,
"You old fool, you silly fool. Can't you plainly see? Oh,
Nothing but a chamber pot me mother sent to me." Oh,
Miles I have traveled, a thousand miles or more. Oh,
Sweat band on a chamber pot I've never seen before.*

*And as I come home, so drunk I couldn't see. Oh,
There I saw a man where no man should be. So,
I says unto me wife, "Tell this to me. Oh,
How come the man where no man should be?" Oh,
"You old fool, you silly fool. Can't you plainly see? Oh,
Nothing but a baby me mother sent to me." Oh,
Miles I have traveled, a thousand miles or more. Oh,
Whiskers on a baby I've never seen before.*

Act IV. Scene 2.
ACT IV. SCENE 2.
A Room in FORD's House.

[Enter FALSTAFF and ALICE FORD]

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, your sorrow hath eaten up my sufferance. I see you are obsequious in your love, and I profess requital to a hair's breadth; not only, Mistress Ford, in the simple office of love, but in all the accoutrement, complement and ceremony of it. But are you sure of your husband now?

ALICE FORD

He's a-birding, sweet Sir John.

MARGARET PAGE

[Within] What, ho, gossip Ford! what, ho!

ALICE FORD

Step into the chamber, Sir John.

[Exit FALSTAFF]

[Enter MARGARET PAGE]

MARGARET PAGE

How now, sweetheart! who's at home besides yourself?

ALICE FORD

Why, none but mine own people.

(...)

MARGARET PAGE

Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

ALICE FORD

Why?

MARGARET PAGE

Why, woman, your husband is in his old lunes again: he so takes on yonder with my husband; so rails against all married mankind; so curses all Eve's daughters, of what complexion soever; and so buffets himself on the forehead, crying, "Peer out, peer out!" that any madness I ever yet beheld seemed but tameness, civility and patience, to this his distemper he is in now: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

ALICE FORD

Why, does he talk of him?

MARGARET PAGE

Of none but him; and swears he was carried out, the last time he searched for him, in a basket; protests to my husband he is now here, and hath drawn him and the rest of their company from their sport, to make another experiment of his suspicion: but I am glad the knight is not here; now he shall see his own foolery.

ALICE FORD

How near is he, Mistress Page?

MARGARET PAGE

Hard by; at street end; he will be here anon.

ALICE FORD

I am undone! The knight is here.

MARGARET PAGE

Why then you are utterly shamed, and he's but a dead man. What a woman are you!—Away with him, away with him! better shame than murder.

ALICE FORD

Which way should he go? how should I bestow him? Shall I put him into the basket again?

[Re-enter FALSTAFF]

FALSTAFF

No, I'll come no more i' the basket. May I not go out ere he come?

MARGARET PAGE

Alas, three of Master Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols, that none shall issue out; otherwise you might slip away ere he came. But what make you here?

FALSTAFF

What shall I do? I'll creep up into the chimney.

ALICE FORD

There they always use to discharge their birding-pieces.

MARGARET PAGE

Creep into the kiln-hole.

(...)

ALICE FORD

He will seek there, on my word. Neither press, coffer, chest, trunk, well, vault, but he hath an abstract for the remembrance of such places, and goes to them by his note: there is no hiding him in the house.

FALSTAFF

I'll go out then.

MARGARET PAGE

If you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John. Unless you go out disguised—

ALICE FORD

How might we disguise him?

MARGARET PAGE

Alas the day, I know not! There is no woman's gown big enough for him otherwise he might put on a hat, a muffler and a kerchief, and so escape.

FALSTAFF

Good hearts, devise something: any extremity rather than a mischief.

ALICE FORD

My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brentford, has a gown above.

MARGARET PAGE

On my word, it will serve him; she's as big as he is: and there's her thrummed hat and her muffler too. Run up, Sir John.

ALICE FORD

Go, go, sweet Sir John: Mistress Page and I will look some linen for your head.

MARGARET PAGE

Quick, quick! we'll come dress you straight: put on the gown the while.

[Exit FALSTAFF]

ALICE FORD

I would my husband would meet him in this shape: he cannot abide the old woman of Brentford; he swears she's a witch; forbade her my house and hath threatened to beat her.

MARGARET PAGE

Heaven guide him to thy husband's cudgel, and the devil guide his cudgel afterwards!

ALICE FORD

But is my husband coming?

MARGARET PAGE

Ah! In good sadness, is he! And talks of the basket too, howsoever he hath had intelligence.

ALICE FORD

We'll try that; for I'll appoint my people to carry the basket again, to meet him at the door with it, as they did last time.

MARGARET PAGE

Nay, but he'll be here presently: let's go dress him like the witch of Brentford.

ALICE FORD

I'll first direct my people what they shall do with the basket. Go up.

MARGARET PAGE

Go up?!!!

ALICE FORD

Ay, go up; I'll bring linen for him straight.

[Exit MARGARET PAGE]

Hang him, dishonest varlet! We cannot misuse him enough. We'll leave a proof, by that which we will do, Wives may be merry, and yet honest too.

(...)

[Enter JANE and ROBERT]

Go, take the basket again on your shoulders: your master is hard at door; if he bid you set it down, obey him: quickly, dispatch.

[Exit]

JANE

Come, come, take it up.

ROBERT

Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

JANE

I hope not; I had as lief bear so much lead.

[Enter FRANCIS FORD, GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

FRANCIS FORD

Ay, but if it prove true, Master Page, have you any way then to unfool me again? Set down the basket, villains! Somebody call my wife. (...)

[Exit JANE and ROBERT]

O you panderly rascals! there's a knot, a gin, a pack, a conspiracy against me: now shall the devil be shamed. What, wife, I say! Come, come forth! Behold what honest clothes you send forth to bleaching!

GEORGE PAGE

Why, this passes, Master Ford; you are not to go loose any longer; you must be pinioned.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Why, this is lunatics! This is mad as a mad dog!

SHALLOW

Indeed, Master Ford, this is not well, indeed.

FRANCIS FORD

So say I too, sir.

[Re-enter ALICE FORD]

Come hither, Mistress Ford; Mistress Ford the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that hath the jealous fool to her husband! I suspect without cause, mistress, do I?

ALICE FORD

Heaven be my witness you do, if you suspect me in any dishonesty.

FRANCIS FORD

Well said, brazen-face! hold it out. Come forth, sirrah!

[Pulling clothes out of the basket]

GEORGE PAGE

This passes!

ALICE FORD

Are you not ashamed? let the clothes alone.

FRANCIS FORD

I shall find you anon.

SIR HUGH EVANS

'Tis unreasonable! Will you take up your wife's clothes? Come away.

FRANCIS FORD

Empty the basket, I say!

GEORGE PAGE

Why, man, why?

FRANCIS FORD

Master Page, as I am a man, there was one conveyed out of my house yesterday in this basket: why may not he be there again? In my house I am sure he is: my intelligence is true; my jealousy is reasonable. Pluck me out all the linen.

ALICE FORD

If you find a man there, he shall die a flea's death.

GEORGE PAGE

Here's no man.

SHALLOW

By my fidelity, this is not well, Master Ford; this wrongs you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Master Ford, you must pray, and not follow the imaginations of your own heart: this is jealousies.

FRANCIS FORD

Well, he's not here I seek for.

GEORGE PAGE

No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.

FRANCIS FORD

Help to search my house this one time. If I find not what I seek, show no colour for my extremity; let me for ever be your table-sport; let them say of me, "As jealous as Ford, that searched a hollow walnut for his wife's leman." Satisfy me once more; once more search with me.

ALICE FORD

What, ho, Mistress Page! come you and the old woman down; my husband will come into the chamber.

[Sound of wheelchair coming down stairs]

[Enter MARGARET PAGE backwards]

FALSTAFF

[Offstage] Sorry... I mean *[in woman's voice]* Sorry!

FRANCIS FORD

Old woman! what old woman's that?

[Re-enter FALSTAFF in woman's clothes]

ALICE FORD

Nay, it is my maid's aunt of Brentford.

FRANCIS FORD

A witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! Have I not forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does she? We are simple men; we do not know what's brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells, by the figure, and such daubery as this is, beyond our element we know nothing. Come, you witch, you hag, you; come, I say!

ALICE FORD

Nay, good, sweet husband! Good gentlemen, let him not strike the old woman.

MARGARET PAGE

Come, Mother Prat; come, give me your hand.

FRANCIS FORD

I'll prat her.

[Beating him]

Out of my door, you witch, you hag, you baggage, you polecat, you runyon! Out, out! I'll conjure you.

I'll fortune-tell you.

[Exit FALSTAFF]

MARGARET PAGE

Are you not ashamed? I think you have killed the poor woman.

ALICE FORD

Nay, he will do it. 'Tis a goodly credit for you.

FRANCIS FORD

Hang her, witch!

SIR HUGH EVANS

By the yea and no, I think the 'oman is a witch indeed: I like not when a 'oman has a great peard; I spy a great peard under her muffler.

FRANCIS FORD

Will you follow, gentlemen? I beseech you, follow; see but the issue of my jealousy: if I cry out thus upon no trail, never trust me when I open again.

GEORGE PAGE

Let's obey his humour a little further: come, gentlemen.

[Exeunt FRANCIS FORD, GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

MARGARET PAGE

By my troth, he beat him most pitifully.

ALICE FORD

Nay, by the mass, that he did not; he beat him most unpitifully, methought.

MARGARET PAGE

I'll have the cudgel hallowed and hung o'er the altar; it hath done meritorious service.

ALICE FORD

What think you? may we, with the warrant of womanhood and the witness of a good conscience, pursue him with any further revenge?

MARGARET PAGE

The spirit of wantonness is sure scared out of him. If the devil have him not in fee-simple, with fine and recovery, he will never, I think, in the way of waste, attempt us again.

ALICE FORD

Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

MARGARET PAGE

Yes, by all means; if it be but to scrape the figures out of your husband's brains. If they can find in their hearts the poor unvirtuous fat knight shall be any further afflicted, we two will still be the ministers.

ALICE FORD

I'll warrant they'll have him publicly shamed: and methinks there would be no period to the jest, should he not be publicly shamed.

MARGARET PAGE

Come, to the forge with it then; shape it: I would not have things cool.

[Exeunt]

Act IV. Scene 3.
ACT IV. SCENE 3.
A Room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter HOST and BARDOLPH]

BARDOLPH

Sir, the Germans desire to have three of your horses: the duke himself will be to-morrow at court, and they are going to meet him.

HOST

What duke should that be comes so secretly? I hear not of him in the court. Let me speak with the gentlemen: they speak English?

BARDOLPH

Ay, sir; I'll call them to you.

HOST

They shall have my horses; but I'll make them pay; I'll sauce them: they have had my house a week at command; I have turned away my other guests: they must come off; I'll sauce them. Come.

[Exeunt]

Act IV. Scene 4.
ACT IV. SCENE 4.
A Room in FORD's House.

[Enter GEORGE PAGE, FRANCIS FORD, MARGARET PAGE, ALICE FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

SIR HUGH EVANS

'Tis one of the best discretions of a 'oman as ever
I did look upon.

GEORGE PAGE

And did he send you both these letters at an instant?

MARGARET PAGE

Within a quarter of an hour.

FRANCIS FORD

Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt;
I rather will suspect the sun with cold
Than thee with wantonness: now doth thy honour stand
In him that was of late an heretic,
As firm as faith.

GEORGE PAGE

'Tis well, 'tis well; no more:
Be not as extreme in submission as in offence.
But let our plot go forward. Let our wives
Yet once again, to make us public sport,
Appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow,
Where we may take him and disgrace him for it.

FRANCIS FORD

There is no better way than that they spoke of.

GEORGE PAGE

How? to send him word they'll meet him in the park
at midnight? Fie, fie! he'll never come.

SIR HUGH EVANS

You say he has been thrown in the rivers and has
been grievously peaten as an old 'oman: methinks
there should be terrors in him that he should not
come; methinks his flesh is punished, he shall have
no desires.

GEORGE PAGE

So think I too.

ALICE FORD

Devise but how you'll use him when he comes,
And let us two devise to bring him thither.

MARGARET PAGE

There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle
And makes milch-kine yield blood and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know
The superstitious idle-headed eld
Received and did deliver to our age
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

GEORGE PAGE

Why, yet there want not many that do fear
In deep of night to walk by this Herne's oak:
But what of this?

ALICE FORD

Marry, this is our device;
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us,
Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head.

GEORGE PAGE

Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come:
And in this shape when you have brought him thither,
What shall be done with him? what is your plot?

MARGARET PAGE

That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:
Nan Page my daughter and my little son
And three or four more of their growth we'll dress
Like urchins, oafs and fairies, green and white,
With rounds of waxen tapers on their heads,
And rattles in their hands: upon a sudden,
As Falstaff, she and I, are newly met,
Let them from forth a sawpit rush at once
With some diffused song: upon their sight,
We two in great amazedness will fly:

Then let them all encircle him about
And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight,
And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,
In their so sacred paths he dares to tread
In shape profane.

ALICE FORD

And till he tell the truth,
Let the supposed fairies pinch him sound
And burn him with their tapers.

MARGARET PAGE

The truth being known,
We'll all present ourselves, dis-horn the spirit,
And mock him home to Windsor.

FRANCIS FORD

The children must
Be practised well to this, or they'll ne'er do't.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I will teach the children their behaviors; and I
will be like a jackanapes also, to burn the
knight with my taber.

FRANCIS FORD

That will be excellent. I'll go and buy them vizards.

MARGARET PAGE

My Nan shall be the queen of all the fairies,
Finely attired in a robe of white.

GEORGE PAGE

That silk will I go buy.

[Aside] and in that time
Shall Master Slender steal my Nan away
And marry her at Eton. Go send to Falstaff straight.

FRANCIS FORD

Nay I'll to him again in name of Brook
He'll tell me all his purpose: sure, he'll come.

MARGARET PAGE

Fear not you that. Go get us properties
And tricking for our fairies.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Let us about it: it is admirable pleasures and fery
honest knaveries.

[Exeunt GEORGE PAGE, FRANCIS FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS]

MARGARET PAGE

Go, Mistress Ford,
Send quickly to Sir John, to know his mind.

[Exit ALICE FORD]

I'll to the doctor: he hath my good will,
And none but he, to marry with Nan Page.
That Slender, though well landed, is an idiot;
And he my husband best of all affects.
The doctor is well money'd, and his friends
Potent at court: he, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.

[Exit]

Act IV. Scene 5.
ACT IV. SCENE 5.
A Room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter HOST and SIMPLE]

HOST

What wouldst thou have, boor? What, thick-skin?
speak, breathe, discuss; brief, short, quick, snap.

SIMPLE

Marry, sir, I come to speak with Sir John Falstaff
from Master Slender.

HOST

There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his
standing-bed and truckle-bed; 'tis painted about
with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new. Go
knock and call. He'll speak like an Anthropophaginian
unto thee: knock, I say.

SIMPLE

There's an old woman, a fat woman, gone up into his
chamber: I'll be so bold as stay, sir, till she come
down; I come to speak with her, indeed.

HOST

Ha! a fat woman? The knight may be robbed: I'll
call. Bully knight! bully Sir John! speak from
thy lungs military: art thou there? it is thine
host, thine Ephesian, calls.

FALSTAFF

[Above] How now, mine host!

HOST

Here's a Bohemian-Tartar carries the coming down of
thy fat woman. Let her descend, bully, let her
descend; my chambers are honourable: Fie, privacy!
Fie!

[Enter FALSTAFF]

FALSTAFF

There was, mine host, an old fat woman even now with
me; but she's gone.

SIMPLE

Pray you, sir, was't not the wise woman of Brentford?

FALSTAFF

Ay, marry, was it, mussel-shell: what would you with her?

SIMPLE

My master, sir, Master Slender, sent to her, seeing her go through the streets, to know, sir, whether one Nym, sir, that beguiled him of a chain, had the chain or no.

FALSTAFF

I spake with the old woman about it.

SIMPLE

And what says she, I pray, sir?

FALSTAFF

Marry, she says that the very same man that beguiled Master Slender of his chain cozened him of it.

SIMPLE

I would I could have spoken with the woman herself; I had other things to have spoken with her too from him.

FALSTAFF

What are they? let us know.

HOST

Ay, come; quick.

SIMPLE

I may not conceal them, sir.

HOST

“Conceal” them, or thou diest.

SIMPLE

Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress Anne Page; to know if it were my master's fortune to have her or no.

FALSTAFF

'Tis, 'tis his fortune.

SIMPLE

What, sir?

FALSTAFF

To have her, or no. Go; say the woman told me so.

SIMPLE

May I be bold to say so, sir?

FALSTAFF

Ay, Sir *Tike*; like who more bold.

SIMPLE

I thank your worship: I shall make my master glad with these tidings.

[Exit]

HOST

Thou art clerkly, thou art clerkly, Sir John. Was there a wise woman with thee?

FALSTAFF

Ay, that there was, mine host; one that hath taught me more wit than ever I learned before in my life; and I paid nothing for it neither, but was paid for my learning.

[Enter BARDOLPH]

BARDOLPH

Out, alas, sir! cozenage, mere cozenage!

HOST

Where be my horses? speak well of them, varletto.

BARDOLPH

Run away with the cozeners; for so soon as I came beyond Eton, they threw me off from behind one of them, in a slough of mire; and set spurs and away, like three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses.

HOST

They are gone but to meet the duke, villain: do not say they be fled; Germans are honest men.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS]

SIR HUGH EVANS

Where is mine host?

HOST

What is the matter, sir?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Have a care of your entertainments: there is a friend of mine come to town tells me there is three cozen-germans that has cozened all the hosts of Readings, of Maidenhead, of Colebrook, of horses and money. I tell you for good will, look you: you are wise and full of gibes and vlouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well.

[Exit]

[Enter DOCTOR CAIUS]

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vere is mine host de Jarteer?

HOST

Here, master doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

DOCTOR CAIUS

I cannot tell vat is dat: but it is tell-a me dat you make grand preparation for a duke de Jarmany: by my trot, dere is no duke dat the court is know to come. I tell you for good vill: adieu.

[Exit]

HOST

Hue and cry, villain, go! Assist me, knight. I am undone! Fly, run, hue and cry, villain! I am undone! My mustangs!

[Exeunt HOST and BARDOLPH]

FALSTAFF

I would all the world might be cozened; for I have been cozened and beaten too. If it should come to the ear of the court, how I have been transformed and how my transformation hath been washed and cudgelled, they would melt me out of my fat drop by drop and liquor fishermen's boots with me; I warrant they would whip me with their fine wits till I were as crest-fallen as a dried pear. I never prospered

since I forswore myself at primero. Well, if my
wind were but long enough **to say my prayers**, I would repent.

[Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY]

Now, whence come you?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

From the two parties, forsooth.

FALSTAFF

The devil take one party and his dam the other! and
so they shall be both bestowed. I have suffered more
for their sakes, more than the villanous inconstancy
of man's disposition is able to bear.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And have not they suffered? Yes, I warrant;
speciously one of them; Mistress Ford, good heart,
is beaten black and blue, that you cannot see a
white spot about her.

FALSTAFF

What tellest thou me of black and blue? I was
beaten myself into all the colours of the rainbow;
and I was like to be apprehended for the witch of
Brentford: but that my admirable dexterity of wit,
my counterfeiting the action of an old woman,
delivered me, the knave constable had set me i' the
stocks, i' the common stocks, for a witch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber: you
shall hear how things go; and, I warrant, to your
content. Here is a letter will say somewhat. Good
hearts, what ado there is to bring you together!
Sure, one of you does not serve heaven well, that
you are so crossed.

FALSTAFF

Come up into my chamber.

[Exeunt]

ACT IV. SCENE 6.

Another Room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FENTON and HOST]

HOST

Master Fenton, talk not to me; my mind is heavy: I will give over all.

FENTON

Yet hear me speak. Assist me in my purpose,
And, as I am a gentleman, I'll give thee
A hundred pound in gold more than your loss.

HOST

I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will at the least keep your counsel.

FENTON

From time to time I have acquainted you
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne Page;
Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,
So far forth as herself might be her chooser,
Even to my wish: I have a letter from her
Of such contents as you will wonder at;
The mirth whereof so larded with my matter,
That neither singly can be manifested,
Without the show of both; fat Falstaff
Hath a great scene: the image of the jest
I'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just 'twixt twelve and one,
Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;
The purpose why, is here: in which disguise,
While other jests are something rank on foot,
Her father hath commanded her to slip
Away with Slender and with him at Eton
Immediately to marry: she hath consented: Now, sir,
Her mother, ever strong against that match
And firm for Doctor Caius, hath appointed
That he shall likewise shuffle her away,
While other sports are tasking of their minds,
And at the deanery, where a priest attends,
Straight marry her: to this her mother's plot
She seemingly obedient likewise hath
Made promise to the doctor. Now, thus it rests:

Her father means she shall be all in white,
And in that habit, when Slender sees his time
To take her by the hand and bid her go,
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended,
The better to denote her to the doctor,
For they must all be mask'd and vizarded,
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
With ribbons pendent, flaring 'bout her head;
And when the doctor spies his vantage ripe,
To pinch her by the hand, and, on that token,
The maid hath given consent to go with him.

HOST

Which means she to deceive, father or mother?

FENTON

Both, my good host, to go along with me:
And here it rests, that you'll procure the vicar
To stay for me at church 'twixt twelve and one,
And, in the lawful name of marrying,
To give our hearts united ceremony.

HOST

Well, husband your device; I'll to the vicar:
Bring you the maid, you shall not lack a priest.

FENTON

So shall I evermore be bound to thee;
Besides, I'll make a present recompense.

[Exeunt]

ACT V. SCENE 1.
A Room in the Garter Inn.

[Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY]

FALSTAFF

Prithee, no more prattling; go. I'll hold. This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers. Away I go. They say there is divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death. Away!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'll provide you a chain; and I'll do what I can to get you a pair of horns.

FALSTAFF

Away, I say; time wears: hold up your head, and mince.

[Exit MISTRESS QUICKLY]

[Enter FRANCIS FORD]

How now, Master Brook! Master Brook, the matter will be known to-night, or never. Be you in the Park about midnight, at Herne's oak, and you shall see wonders.

FRANCIS FORD

Went you not to her today, sir, as you told me you had appointed?

FALSTAFF

I went to her, Master Brook, as you see, like a poor old man: but I came from her, Master Brook, like a poor old woman. That same knave Ford, her husband, hath the finest mad devil of jealousy in him, Master Brook, that ever governed frenzy. I will tell you: he beat me grievously, in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, Master Brook, I fear not Goliath with a weaver's beam; because I know also life is a shuttle. I am in haste; go along with me: I'll tell you all, Master Brook. Since I plucked geese, played truant and whipped top, I knew not what 'twas to be beaten till lately. Follow me: I'll tell you strange things of this knave Ford, on whom to-night I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand. Follow. Strange things in hand, Master Brook! Follow.

[Exeunt]

Act V. Scene 2.
ACT V. SCENE 2.
Windsor Park.

[Enter GEORGE PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER]

GEORGE PAGE

Come, come; we'll couch i' the castle-ditch till we see the light of our fairies. Remember, son Slender, my daughter—

SLENDER

Ay, forsooth; I have spoke with her and we have a nay-word how to know one another: I come to her in white, and cry “mum”; she cries “budget”; and by that we know one another.

SHALLOW

That's good too: but what needs either your “mum” or her “budget”? The white will decipher her well enough. It hath struck ten o'clock.

GEORGE PAGE

The night is dark; light and spirits will become it well. Heaven prosper our sport! No man means evil but the devil, and we shall know him by his horns. Let's away; follow me.

[Exeunt]

ACT V. SCENE 3.
A Street Leading To The Park.

[Enter MARGARET PAGE, ALICE FORD, and DOCTOR CAIUS]

MARGARET PAGE

Master doctor, my daughter is in green: when you see your time, take her by the hand, away with her to the deanery, and dispatch it quickly. Go before into the Park: we two must go together.

DOCTOR CAIUS

I know vat I have to do. Adieu.

MARGARET PAGE

Fare you well, sir.

[Exit DOCTOR CAIUS]

My husband will not rejoice so much at the abuse of Falstaff as he will chafe at the doctor's marrying my daughter: but 'tis no matter; better a little chiding than a great deal of heart-break.

ALICE FORD

Where is Nan now and her troop of fairies, and the Welsh devil Hugh?

MARGARET PAGE

They are all couched in a pit hard by Herne's oak, with obscured lights; which, at the very instant of Falstaff's and our meeting, they will at once display to the night.

ALICE FORD

That cannot choose but amaze him.

MARGARET PAGE

If he be not amazed, he will be mocked; if he be amazed, he will every way be mocked.

ALICE FORD

We'll betray him finely.

MARGARET PAGE

Against such lewdsters and their lechery
Those that betray them do no treachery.

ALICE FORD

The hour draws on. To the oak, to the oak!

[Exeunt]

Act V. Scene 4.
ACT V. SCENE 4.
Windsor Park.

[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS, disguised, with others as Fairies]

SIR HUGH EVANS

Trib, trib, fairies; come; and remember your parts:
be pold, I pray you; follow me into the pit; and
when I give the watch-ords, do as I bid you:
come, come; trib, trib.

[Exeunt]

Act V. Scene 5.
ACT V. SCENE 5.
Another Part of the Park.

[Enter FALSTAFF disguised as Herne]

FALSTAFF

The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. Now, the hot-blooded gods assist me! Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man, in some other, a man a beast. You were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of Leda. O omnipotent Love! how near the god drew to the complexion of a goose! (...) When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do? For me, I am here a Windsor stag; and the fattest, I think, i' the forest. Send me a cool rut-time, Jove, or who can blame me to piss my tallow? Who comes here? my doe?

[Enter ALICE FORD]

ALICE FORD

Sir John! art thou there, my deer? my male deer?

FALSTAFF

My doe! (...) Let the sky rain potatoes; let it thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves, hail kissing-comfits and snow eringoes; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here.

[Enter MARGARET PAGE]

ALICE FORD

Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

FALSTAFF

Divide me like a bribe buck, each a haunch: I will keep my sides to myself, my shoulders for the fellow of this walk, and my horns I bequeath your husbands. Am I a woodman, ha? Speak I like Herne the hunter? Why, now is Cupid a child of conscience; he makes restitution. As I am a true spirit, welcome!

[Noise within]

MARGARET PAGE

Alas, what noise?

ALICE FORD

Heaven forgive our sins

FALSTAFF

What should this be?

ALICE FORD And MARGARET PAGE

Away, away!

[They run off]

FALSTAFF

I think the devil will not have me damned, lest the
oil that's in me should set hell on fire; he would
never else cross me thus.

*[Enter SIR HUGH EVANS, PISTOL, NYM, MISTRESS QUICKLY, and others, as Fairies,
with tapers]*

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Fairies, black, grey, green, and white,
You moonshine revellers and shades of night,
You orphan heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hobgoblin, make the fairy oyes.

PISTOL

Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toys.
Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:
Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:
Our radiant queen hates sluts and sluttery.

FALSTAFF

They are fairies; he that speaks to them shall die:
I'll wink and couch: no man their works must eye.

[Lies down upon his face]

NYM

Where's Bead? Go you, and where you find a maid
That, ere she sleep, has thrice her prayers said,
Raise up the organs of her fantasy;
Sleep she as sound as careless infancy:
But those as sleep and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.

(...)

SIR HUGH EVANS

And twenty glow-worms shall our lanterns be,
To guide our measure round about the tree.
But, stay; I smell a man of middle-earth.

FALSTAFF

Heavens defend me from that Welsh fairy, lest he
transform me to a piece of cheese!

PISTOL

Vile worm, thou wast o'erlook'd even in thy birth.

NYM

With trial-fire touch me his finger-end:
If he be chaste, the flame will back descend
And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
It is the flesh of a corrupted heart.

PISTOL

A trial, come.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Come, will this wood take fire?
[They burn him with their tapers]

FALSTAFF

Oh, Oh, Oh!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!
About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme;
And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.

ALL

Fie on sinful fantasy!
Fie on lust and luxury!
Lust is but a bloody fire,
Kindled with unchaste desire,
Fed in heart, whose flames aspire
As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher.
Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
Pinch him for his villany;

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

[During this song they pinch FALSTAFF. DOCTOR CAIUS comes one way, and steals away a boy in green; SLENDER another way, and takes off a boy in white; and FENTON comes and steals away ANN PAGE. A noise of hunting is heard within. All the Fairies run away. FALSTAFF pulls off his buck's head, and rises.]

[Enter GEORGE PAGE, FRANCIS FORD, MARGARET PAGE, and ALICE FORD]

GEORGE PAGE

Nay, do not fly; I think we have watch'd you now
Will none but Herne the hunter serve your turn?

MARGARET PAGE

I pray you, come, hold up the jest no higher
Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?
See you these, husband? do not these fair yokes
Become the forest better than the town?

FRANCIS FORD

Now, sir, who's a cuckold now? Master Brook,
Falstaff's a knave, a cuckoldly knave; here are his
horns, Master Brook. And, Master Brook, he hath
enjoyed nothing of Ford's but his buck-basket, his
cudgel, and twenty pounds of money, which must be
paid to Master Brook. His horses are arrested for
it, Master Brook.

ALICE FORD

Sir John, we have had ill luck. We could never meet.
I will never take you for my love again; but I will
always count you my deer.

FALSTAFF

I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass.

FRANCIS FORD

Ay, and an ox too: both the proofs are extant.

FALSTAFF

And these are not fairies? I was three or four
times in the thought they were not fairies: and yet
the guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my
powers, drove the grossness of the foppery into a
received belief, in despite of the teeth of all
rhyme and reason, that they were fairies. See now
how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent, when 'tis upon
ill employment!

SIR HUGH EVANS

Sir John Falstaff, serve Got, and leave your
desires, and fairies will not pinse you.

FRANCIS FORD

Well said, fairy Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

And leave your jealousies too, I pray you.

FRANCIS FORD

I will never mistrust my wife again till thou art able to woo her in good English.

FALSTAFF

Have I laid my brain in the sun and dried it, that it wants matter to prevent so gross o'erreaching as this? Am I ridden with a Welsh goat too? shall I have a coxcomb of cheese? 'Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Seese is not good to give putter; your belly is all putter.

FALSTAFF

"Seese" and "putter"! have I lived to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English? This is enough to be the decay of lust and late-walking through the realm.

MARGARET PAGE

Why Sir John, do you think, though we would have thrust the virtue out of our hearts by the head and shoulders and have given ourselves without scruple to hell, that ever the devil could have made you our delight?

FRANCIS FORD

What, a hodge-pudding? a bag of flax?

MARGARET PAGE

A puffed man?

GEORGE PAGE

Old, cold, withered and of intolerable entrails?

FRANCIS FORD

And one that is as slanderous as Satan?

GEORGE PAGE

And as poor as Job?

FRANCIS FORD

And as wicked as his wife?

SIR HUGH EVANS

And given to fornications, and to taverns and sack
and wine and metheglins, and to drinkings and
swearings and starings, pribbles and prabbles?

FALSTAFF

Well, I am your theme: you have the start of me; I
am dejected; I am not able to answer the Welsh
flannel; ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me: use
me as you will.

FRANCIS FORD

Marry, sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to one
Master Brook, that you have cozened of money, to
whom you should have been a pander: over and above
that you have suffered, I think to repay that money
will be a biting affliction.

GEORGE PAGE

Yet be cheerful, knight: thou shalt eat a posset
to-night at my house; where I will desire thee to
laugh at my wife, that now laughs at thee: tell her
Master Slender hath married her daughter.

MARGARET PAGE

[Aside] Doctors doubt that: if Anne Page be my
daughter, she is, by this, Doctor Caius' wife.

[Enter SLENDER with RUGBY and DOCTOR CAIUS with SIMPLE]

SLENDER

Whoa ho! ho, father Page!

GEORGE PAGE

Son, how now! how now, son! have you dispatched?

SLENDER

Dispatched! I'll make the best in Gloucestershire
know on't; would I were hanged, la, else.

GEORGE PAGE

Of what, son?

SLENDER

I came yonder at Eton to marry Mistress Anne Page, and she's a great lubberly boy. If it had not been i' the church, I would have swung him, or he should have swung me. If I did not think it had been Anne Page, would I might never stir!—and 'tis a postmaster's boy.

GEORGE PAGE

Upon my life, then, you took the wrong.

SLENDER

What need you tell me that? I think so, when I took a boy for a girl. If I had been married to him, for all he was in woman's apparel, I would not have had him.

GEORGE PAGE

Why, this is your own folly. Did not I tell you how you should know my daughter by her garments?

SLENDER

I went to her in white, and cried "mum," and she cried —

RUGBY

"Budget" (...)

SLENDER

And yet it was not Anne, but a postmaster's boy.

MARGARET PAGE

Good George, be not angry: I knew of your purpose; turned my daughter into green; and, indeed, she is now with the doctor there married.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ha! Cannot you see but to marry boys?

[SIMPLE removes mask]

Aah! Vere is Mistress Page? By gar, I am cozened. I ha' married *un garçon*, a boy; *un paysan*, by gar. A boy it is not Anne Page! By gar, I am cozened.

MARGARET PAGE

Why, did you take her in green?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ay, by gar, and 'tis a boy: by gar, I'll raise all Windsor.

FRANCIS FORD

This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

GEORGE PAGE

My heart misgives me: here comes Master Fenton.

[Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE]

How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE

Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!

GEORGE PAGE

Now, mistress, how chance you went not with Master Slender?

MARGARET PAGE

Why went you not with master doctor, maid?

FENTON

You do amaze her: hear the truth of it.
You would have married her most shamefully,
Where there was no proportion held in love.
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed;
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, or unduteous title,
Since therein she doth evitate and shun
A thousand irreligious cursed hours,
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.

FRANCIS FORD

Stand not amazed; here is no remedy:
In love the heavens themselves do guide the state;
Money buys lands, and wives are sold by fate.

FALSTAFF

I am glad, though you have ta'en a special stand to
strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

GEORGE PAGE

Well, what remedy? Fenton, heaven give thee joy!
What cannot be eschew'd must be embraced.

FALSTAFF

When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased.

MARGARET PAGE

Well, I will muse no further. Master Fenton,
Heaven give you many, many merry days!
Good husband, let us every one go home,
And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire;
Sir John and all.

FRANCIS FORD

Let it be so. Sir John,
To Master Brook you yet shall hold your word
For he tonight shall lie with Mistress Ford.

[Exeunt Omnis]