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The Merry Wives of Windsor

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The Merry Wives*

of*

Windsor*

by William Shakespeare

Adapted for

SHAKESPEARE CAROLINA

by

Daniel Gordon

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Dramatis Personæ

SIR JOHN FALSTAFF, a knight, scoundrel and occasional thief.

FENTON, a young Gentleman.

FORD, Jealous husband of Mistress Ford

PAGE, husband of Mistress Page

DOCTOR CAIUS, a French Physician.

HOST of the Garter Inn.

PISTOL, NYM, Followers of Falstaff.

ROBIN, Page to Falstaff.

MISTRESS FORD, A resident of Windsor

MISTRESS PAGE, A resident of Windsor

ANNE PAGE, her Daughter, in love with Fenton.

MISTRESS QUICKLY, Servant to Doctor Caius.

A Servant

The Scene: A street in Windsor. Behind stands a trailer park—
“The Garter Inn.” Each trailer represents a “house” for the Fords,
Pages, and Falstaff. There is a small pool, a Tiki bar, a barbeque
grill, and a doghouse.

Part One

SCENE 1. Outside the Garter Inn.

Enter Dramatis Personae for opening “poolside party.” Fifteen to twenty minutes before the performance begins, actors may walk onstage to begin a cookout: one will grill hot dogs, one might dangle his or her feet in the pool, another will go to the Tiki bar for a drink, and others will engage in friendly conversation. As Curtain nears, show music will play and Fenton will ask Anne Page to dance; moments later, Doctor Caius will tap Fenton’s shoulder and step in (the Pages senior will be noticeably interested). Fenton allows Caius enough dance time to embarrass himself, then cuts back in, prompting Caius to move to the bar and the Host for a drink.

DOCTOR CAIUS

There is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master George Page, which is pretty virginity. She has brown hair, and speaks small like a woman. It is that fery person for all the world, as just as you will desire; and seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold and silver, is her grandsire upon his death’s-bed give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old.

HOST

Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

HOST

I know the young gentlewoman; she has good gifts.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is good gifts.

HOST

Here is honest Master Page.

PAGE

I am glad to see your worships well.

FENTON continues to dance, more provocatively, with ANNE

DOCTOR CAIUS

Young Master Fenton! You jack'nape! By gar, he is a shallenge. I will cut his troat in dee park, and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape boy to meddle or make. By gar, I will cut all his two stones; by gar, he shall not have a stone to throw at his dog.

MISTRESS PAGE

Nay, daughter, carry the wine in.

Exit ANNE PAGE

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 but Host

SCENE 2. Another part of the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF, NYM, PISTOL, and ROBIN

FALSTAFF

Mine host of the Garter!

HOST

What says my bully-rook?

FALSTAFF

A stoup of wine, good mine host.

HOST

How long is't ago, Jack, since thou sawest thine own knee?

FALSTAFF

My own knee! When I was about thy years, mine host, I was not an eagle's talon in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman's thumb-ring. A plague of sighing and grief! It blows a man up like a bladder. A goodly portly man, i' faith, and a corpulent; of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye and a most noble carriage; and, as I think, my age some fifty, or, by'r lady, inclining to three score. Company, villainous company, hath been the spoil of me. I was as virtuously given as a gentleman need to be; virtuous enough; swore little; diced not—above seven times a

week; went to a bawdy-house not—above once in a quarter—of an hour; paid money that I borrowed, three of four times; lived well and in good compass, and now I live out of all order, out of all compass.

HOST

Why, you are so fat, Sir John, that you must needs be out of all compass.

FALSTAFF

Do thou amend thy face, and I'll amend my life.
Truly, mine host, I must turn away some of my followers.

HOST

Let them wag.

FALSTAFF

I sit at ten pounds a week. Well, sirs, 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?

NYM

I know the man. He is of substance good.

FALSTAFF

My honest lads, 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. Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse. I have writ

me here a letter to her, and here another to Page's wife, who but of late gave me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious iliads. 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! 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, lads, we will thrive!

PISTOL

Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become?

NYM

I will run no base humour; I will keep the havior of reputation.

FALSTAFF

[To ROBIN] Boy! Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly; sail like my pinnace to these golden shores. Rogues, hence, avaunt! Vanish like hailstones, go; trudge, plod away o' the hoof; seek shelter, pack! You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogues! You stand upon your honour! Falstaff will learn the humour of the age.

Exeunt FALSTAFF and ROBIN

PISTOL

Let vultures gripe thy guts!

NYM

I have operations which be humours of revenge.

PISTOL

Wilt thou revenge?

NYM

By welkin and her star!

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.

PISTOL

Thou art the Mars of malcontents! I second thee; troop on.

Exeunt

SCENE 3. A street.

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

An honest, willing, kind woman, as ever servant shall come in house withal, and, I warrant you, no tell-tale nor no breed-bate. The very yea and the no is, the French doctor, my master, Dr Caius—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—Are you avised o' that? His worst fault is that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way. But nobody but has his fault. Notwithstanding, to tell you in your ear, my master himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page. But notwithstanding that, I know Anne's mind, that's neither here nor there.

Enter FENTON

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 Anne Page?

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.

FENTON

Well, I shall see her today. Hold, there's money for thee. Let me have thy voice in my behalf; if thou seest her before me, commend me. 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

SCENE 4. Before PAGE'S house.

Enter MISTRESS PAGE, with a letter

MISTRESS 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,

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

One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age to show himself a young gallant! He dares, in this manner, assay me? Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What should I say to him? Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting down of men. How shall I be revenged on him? For revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

Enter MISTRESS FORD

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page! Trust me, I was going to see you.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Faith, but you do, in my mind.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

What's the matter, woman?

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

What? Thou liest! Sir Alice Ford!

MISTRESS 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. 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?

MISTRESS PAGE

Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs. 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. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtledoves ere one chaste man.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD: That bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies,

MISTRESS PAGE: That huge bombard of sack, that stuffed
cloak-bag of guts,

MISTRESS FORD: That roasted Manningtree ox with the
pudding in his belly,

MISTRESS PAGE: that reverend vice,

MISTRESS FORD: that grey iniquity,

MISTRESS PAGE: that father ruffian,

MISTRESS FORD: that vanity in years?

MISTRESS PAGE: Wherein is he good, but to taste sack and
drink it?

MISTRESS FORD: Wherein neat and cleanly, but to carve a
capon and eat it?

MISTRESS PAGE: Wherein cunning, but in craft?

MISTRESS FORD: Wherein crafty, but in villainy?

MISTRESS PAGE: Wherein villainous, but in all things?

MISTRESS FORD: Wherein worthy, but in nothing?

MISTRESS PAGE: Let's be revenged on him. 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.

MISTRESS FORD

Nay, I will consent to act any villainy 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.

Enter FORD with PISTOL, and PAGE with NYM

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, look where he comes, and my good George too. He's as far
from jealousy as I am from giving him cause, and that I hope is an
unmeasurable distance.

MISTRESS FORD

You are the happier woman.

MISTRESS PAGE

Let's consult together against this greasy knight.

They retire

FORD

Well, I hope it be not so.

PISTOL

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

FORD

Why, sir, my wife is not young.

PISTOL

He woos both high and low, both rich and poor,
Both young and old, one with another.

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!

FORD

What name, sir?

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, Nym!
Believe it, Page; she speaks sense.

Exit

FORD

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

NYM

[To PAGE] And this is true. He loves your wife; there's the short
and the long. My name is Nym. I speak and I avouch, 'tis true.
Falstaff loves your wife. Adieu.

Exit

FORD

I will seek out Falstaff.

PAGE

I never heard such a drawing, affecting rogue.

FORD

If I do find it. . . .well.

PAGE

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

FORD

'Twas a good sensible fellow. . . .well.

MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD come forward

PAGE

How now, Meg!

MISTRESS PAGE

Whither go you, George?

MISTRESS FORD

How now, sweet Frank! Why art thou melancholy?

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS PAGE

Have with you. You'll come to dinner, George? [*Aside to MISTRESS FORD*] Look who comes yonder. She shall be our messenger to this paltry knight.

MISTRESS FORD

[*Aside to MISTRESS PAGE*] Trust me, I thought on her; she'll fit it.

MISTRESS PAGE

[Aside to MISTRESS QUICKLY] You are come to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and MISTRESS QUICKLY

PAGE

How now, Master Ford!

FORD

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

PAGE

Yes; and you heard what the other told me?

FORD

Do you think there is truth in them?

PAGE

Hang 'em! 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.

FORD

Were they his men?

PAGE

Marry, were they.

FORD

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

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.

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.

Enter Host, with DOCTOR CAIUS

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. How now, mine host!

HOST

How now, bully-rook!

FORD

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

Drawing him aside

HOST

What sayest thou, my bully-rook? Hast thou no suit against my knight, Sir John Falstaff, my guest-cavalier?

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, and thy name shall be Brook.

PAGE

Have with you, mine host.

Exeunt Host, DOCTOR CAIUS, and PAGE

FORD

Though Page be a secure fool, and 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

SCENE 5. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and PISTOL

FALSTAFF

I will not lend thee a penny.

PISTOL

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

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. 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 gratis? At a word, hang no more about me! I am no gibbet for you; go. You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! You will not do it, you!

PISTOL

I do relent! What would thou more of me?

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.

PISTOL

[Aside] This punk is one of Cupid's carriers.

Exit

FALSTAFF

Good maid, then.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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 *[farts]*

I warrant thee, nobody hears. 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 that would have won any woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never get an eye-wink of 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 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

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. 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 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

This news distracts me! 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 Host

HOST

Sir John, there's one Master Brook 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?

HOST

Ay, sir.

FALSTAFF

Call him in.

Exit Host

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 Host, with FORD disguised

FORD

Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

Exit Host

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

FORD

Good Sir John, I sue for yours. 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 intrusion; for they say, if money go before, all ways do lie open.

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

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.

FORD

I will tell you, sir, if you will give me the hearing.

FALSTAFF

Very well, sir; proceed.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Well, sir.

FORD

I have long loved her, and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her; followed her with a doting observance; 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.

FALSTAFF

Have you received no promise of satisfaction at her hands?

FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

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. Now, Sir John: 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!

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?

FORD

O, understand my drift. She dwells so securely on the excellency of her honour, that my soul dares not present itself: she is too bright to be looked against. Now, could I come to her with any detection in my hand, I could drive her then from the ward of her purity, her reputation, her marriage-vow. What say you, 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.

FORD

O good sir!

FALSTAFF

I say you shall.

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.

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.

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

FORD

What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is ready to crack. 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. 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 Dutchman with my butter, a Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my whisky bottle, than I will trust my wife with herself. 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!

Enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

MISTRESS PAGE

Nay, keep your way, little gallant; you were wont to be a follower, but now you are a leader. Whether had you rather lead mine eyes, or eye your master's heel?

ROBIN

I had rather, forsooth, go before you like a man, than follow him like a dwarf.

FORD

Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

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.

MISTRESS PAGE

Be sure of that—two other husbands.

FORD

Where had you this pretty weather-cock?

MISTRESS 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.

FORD

Sir John Falstaff!

MISTRESS PAGE

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?

FORD

Indeed she is.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

FORD

Has Page any brains? Hath he any eyes? Hath he any thinking? Sure, they sleep; he hath no use of them. 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.

Checks watch

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 will be there. I will go.

Enter PAGE, Host, and DOCTOR CAIUS

PAGE

Well met, Master Ford.

FORD

Trust me, a good knot. I will have good cheer at home, and I pray you all go with me but for a little while and we'll return anon.

PAGE

I must excuse myself, Master Ford. We have appointed to dine with my daughter, Mistress Anne. We have lingered about a match between her and this doctor, and this day we shall have our answer. 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.

PAGE

Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no having, 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.

FORD

I beseech you heartily, some of you come to my home for dinner. 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, mine host. Will you go, gentles?

PAGE

Have with you to see this monster.

Exeunt

SCENE 6. A room in FORD'S house.

Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE

MISTRESS FORD

What, Joan!

MISTRESS PAGE

Quickly, quickly! Is the buck-basket—

MISTRESS FORD

I warrant. What, Robin, I say!

Enter Servant with a basket

MISTRESS PAGE

Come, come, come.

MISTRESS FORD

Here, set it down.

MISTRESS PAGE

Give your maid the charge; we must be brief.

MISTRESS FORD

Marry, as I told you before, be ready here hard by, and when I suddenly call you, come forth, and without any pause or staggering take this basket. 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

You will do it?

MISTRESS FORD

I ha' told her over and over; she lacks no direction. Be gone, and come when you are called.

Exeunt Servant

MISTRESS PAGE

Here comes little Robin.

Enter ROBIN

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

ROBIN

Ay, I'll be sworn.

MISTRESS PAGE

Thou'rt a good boy. I'll go hide me.

MISTRESS FORD

Do so. Go tell thy master I am alone.

Exit ROBIN

Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

MISTRESS PAGE

Yes, yes. 'Heaven knows how I love you'. I warrant thee; if I do not act it, hiss me.

Exit

MISTRESS FORD

Go to, then. We'll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross watery pumpion; we'll teach him.

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!

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS 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 ship-tire—

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

By the Lord, thou art a traitor 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.

MISTRESS 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; I cannot. But I love thee, none but thee, and thou deservest it.

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

Enter ROBIN

ROBIN

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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF hides himself

Re-enter MISTRESS PAGE

What's the matter? How now!

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

What cause of suspicion?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Why, alas, what's the matter?

MISTRESS PAGE

Your husband's coming hither, woman, 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.

MISTRESS FORD

'Tis not so, I hope.

MISTRESS 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, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

For shame! 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. Send him by your maid to Datchet-mead.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FALSTAFF

I love thee. Help me away. *(to the other)* I love thee. Help me away. Let me creep in here.

Gets into the basket; they cover him with foul linen

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

What, Joan!

Exit ROBIN

Re-enter Servant

Go take up these clothes here quickly. Carry them to the laundress
in Datchet-meat; quickly, come.

Enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and Host

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. How now!
Whither bear you this?

Servant

To the laundress, forsooth.

MISTRESS FORD

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

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.

[Fart]

Exeunt Servant with the basket

Gentlemen, ascend my chambers; search, seek, find out. I'll
warrant we'll unkennel the fox.

PAGE

Good Master Ford, be contented. You wrong yourself too much.

FORD

True, Master Page. Up, gentlemen; you shall see sport anon.
Follow me, gentlemen.

Exit

DOCTOR CAIUS

This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies. By gar, 'tis no the fashion of France; it is not jealous in France.

PAGE

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

Exeunt PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and Host

MISTRESS PAGE

Is there not a double excellency in this?

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

We will do it. Let him be sent for tomorrow, eight o'clock, to have amends.

Re-enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and Host

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

[Aside to MISTRESS FORD] Heard you that?

MISTRESS FORD

You use me well, Master Ford, do you?

FORD

Ay, I do so.

MISTRESS FORD

Heaven make you better than your thoughts!

FORD

Amen!

MISTRESS PAGE

You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.

FORD

Ay, ay; I must bear it.

DOCTOR CAIUS

If there be any body in de house, and in the chambers, and in the coffers, and in the presses, heaven forgive my sins at the day of judgment! By gar, there is no bodies.

PAGE

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

FORD

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, I see 'tis an honest woman.

FORD

Well, I promised you a dinner. 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.

PAGE

Let's go in, gentlemen; but, trust me, we'll mock him. I do invite you tomorrow morning to my house to breakfast. After, we'll a-bowling together. Shall it be so?

FORD

Any thing.

HOST

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.

FORD

Pray you, go, Master Page.

Exeunt

Part Two

SCENE 1. A room in PAGE'S house.

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY, FENTON and ANNE PAGE

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 seek to heal it only by his wealth,
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.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Gentle Master Fenton,
Yet seek her father's love; still seek it, sir.
If opportunity and humblest suit
Cannot attain it, why, then—

Enter PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE

Hark you hither!
You may ask your father; here he comes.

PAGE

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.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

PAGE

She is no match for you.

FENTON

Sir, will you hear me?

PAGE

No, good Master Fenton.
Knowing my mind, you wrong me.

Exit PAGE

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[To FENTON] Speak to Mistress Page.

FENTON

Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter
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 a fool.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[Aside to ANNE] 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!

MISTRESS 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 MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FENTON

I thank thee, and I pray thee, once tonight 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, Dr Caius, had Mistress Anne; or, in sooth, I would Master Fenton had her. I will do what I can for them both, 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

SCENE 2. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and Host

FALSTAFF

Mine host!

HOST

Here, sir.

FALSTAFF

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

Exit HOST

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 rogue slighted me into the river with as little remorse as he 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.

Re-enter HOST with sack

HOST

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. Call her in.

HOST

Come in, woman!

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

By your leave, I cry you mercy. Give your worship good morrow.

FALSTAFF

[To Host] Go brew me a pottle of sack finely.

HOST

With eggs, sir?

FALSTAFF

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

Exit HOST

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 take
on with her men; they mistook their erection.

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 this morning a-bowling. She desires you
once more to come to her between eight and nine; 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.

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

FALSTAFF

I marvel I hear not of Master Brook; he sent me word to stay within. I like his money well—O, here he comes.

Enter FORD disguised

FORD

Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

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

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.

FORD

And sped you, sir?

FALSTAFF

Very ill-favoredly, Master Brook.

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.

FORD

What, while you were there?

FALSTAFF

While I was there.

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.

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 villainous smell that ever offended nostril.

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, one of Ford's knaves was called forth by his mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to Datchet-lane. She took me, and met the jealous knave his master in the door, who asked him once or twice what she hath in her 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, 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.

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 this morning gone a-bowling. I have received from her another embassy of meeting; 'twixt eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

FORD

'Tis past eight already, sir.

FALSTAFF

Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. 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

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

SCENE 3. A room in FORD'S house.

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS 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?

MISTRESS FORD

He's a-bowling, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Step into the chamber, Sir John.

Exit FALSTAFF

Enter MISTRESS PAGE

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Why, none but mine own people.

MISTRESS PAGE

Indeed!

MISTRESS FORD

No, certainly. *[Aside to her]* Speak louder.

MISTRESS PAGE

Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

MISTRESS FORD

Why?

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, woman, your husband is in his old luns again. He so takes on yonder with my husband, so rails against all married mankind, so curses all Eve's daughters. I am glad the fat knight is not here.

MISTRESS FORD

Why, does he talk of him?

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD

How near is he, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

I am undone! The knight is here.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS 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! I'll come no more i' the basket! I'll come no more i' the basket! May I not go out ere he come?

MISTRESS PAGE

Alas, three of Master Ford's brothers watch the road with pistols.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

He will seek there, on my word. There is no hiding you in the house.

FALSTAFF

I'll go out then.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

How might we disguise him?

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exit FALSTAFF

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

But is my husband coming?

MISTRESS PAGE

Ah, in good sadness, is he; and talks of the basket too, howsoever he hath had intelligence.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

I'll first direct my man what he shall do with the basket. Go up; I'll bring linen for him straight.

Exit

MISTRESS 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.

Exit

Re-enter MISTRESS FORD with Servant

MISTRESS FORD

Go, sirrah, take the basket again. Your master is hard at door; if he bid you set it down, obey him. Quickly, dispatch!

Exit

SERVANT

Pray heaven it be not full of knight again; I had as lief bear so much lead.

Enter FORD, PAGE, Host, DOCTOR CAIUS

FORD

Ay, but if it prove true, Master Page, have you any way then to unfool me again? Set down the basket, villain! Somebody call my wife. Youth in a basket! O you panderly rascal! There's a knot, a

gang, 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!

PAGE

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

FORD

So say I too, sir.

Re-enter MISTRESS 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?

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

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

Pulling clothes out of the basket

PAGE

This passes!

MISTRESS FORD

Are you not ashamed? Let the clothes alone.

FORD

I shall find you anon. Empty the basket, I say!

MISTRESS FORD

Why, man, why?

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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

PAGE

Here's no man.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

FORD

Well, he's not here I seek for.

HOST

No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.

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. Satisfy me once more; once more search with me.

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

Old woman! What old woman's that?

MISTRESS FORD

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

Re-enter FALSTAFF in woman's clothes, and MISTRESS PAGE

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

I'll pratt her. 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 down, you witch, you hag, you; come down, I say!

MISTRESS FORD

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

Beating FALSTAFF

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

Hang her, witch!

DOCTOR CAIUS

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.

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.

PAGE

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

Exeunt FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and Host

MISTRESS PAGE

Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

The spirit of wantonness is, sure, scared out of him. He will never, I think attempt us again.

MISTRESS FORD

Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt

SCENE 4. A street.

Enter FALSTAFF

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. Well, if my wind were but long enough to say my prayers, I would repent.

Exit

SCENE 5A. A room in FORD'S house.

Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and DOCTOR CAIUS

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Within a quarter of an hour.

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.

PAGE

'Tis well, 'tis well; no more. Be not as extreme in submission as in offence. But let our plot go forward.

FORD

There is no better way than that they spoke of.

PAGE

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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.

PAGE

So think I too.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor park,
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,
Walk round about a pool, with great ragg'd horns;
And there he blasts the air and shakes a chain
In a most hideous and dreadful manner.

PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Marry, this is our device;
That Falstaff at that pool shall meet with us.

PAGE

What shall be done with him? What is your plot?

MISTRESS PAGE

That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:
Nan Page my daughter and two or three
Of Falstaff's discarded followers 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.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

PAGE

That silk will I go buy.

Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS

And in that time
Shall you steal my Nan away
And marry her at Eton.

To all

Go send to Falstaff straight.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Exeunt PAGE, FORD, and DOCTOR CAIUS

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exit MISTRESS FORD

I'll to young Master Fenton; he hath my good will,
And none but he, to marry with Nan Page.
That Doctor, 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. But Fenton, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.

Exit

SCENE 5B. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY

FALSTAFF

Now, whence come you?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

From the two parties, forsooth.

FALSTAFF

The devil take one party and his dam the other! I have suffered
more for their sakes, more than the villainous 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.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, let me speak with you in your chamber, and you shall hear
how things go; and, I warrant, to your content. Here is a letter will
say somewhat.

FALSTAFF

Come up into my chamber.

Exeunt

SCENE 6. Another room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FENTON and Host

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.

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,
I have a letter from her, of such contents
As you will wonder at.
To-night at Herne's pool, just 'twixt twelve and one,
Her father hath commanded her to slip
Away with Doctor Caius and with him at Eton
Immediately to marry. She hath feigned consent.

HOST

How means she to deceive her father?

FENTON

That you shall see.
My good host, 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.
Bring you the maid: [*reveals dog-collar*] You shall not lack a priest.

FENTON

So shall I evermore be bound to thee.

Exeunt

SCENE 7. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY

FALSTAFF

Prithee, no more prattling; go. I'll hold.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

Exit Quickly

FALSTAFF

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!

Exit Falstaff

SCENE 8. A street leading to the Park.

Enter MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and DOCTOR CAIUS

MISTRESS PAGE

Master doctor, though my husband told you, my daughter is in white. When you see your time, take her by the hand, away with her to the deanery, and dispatch it quickly.

DOCTOR CAIUS

I know vat I have to do. Adieu.

MISTRESS 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 young Master Fenton's marrying my daughter. But 'tis no matter; better a little chiding than a great deal of heart-break.

MISTRESS FORD

Where is Nan now and her troop of fairies?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

That cannot choose but amaze him.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

We'll betray him finely.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

The hour draws on. Let us hide ourselves!

Exeunt

SCENE 9. 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. 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?
When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do?

Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE

MISTRESS FORD

Sir John!

FALSTAFF

Who comes here? My doe?

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

My doe with the black scut! Let the sky rain potatoes; let it
thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves. Let there come a tempest of
provocation, I will shelter me here.

MISTRESS 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

MISTRESS PAGE

Alas, what noise?

MISTRESS FORD

Heaven forgive our sins

FALSTAFF

What should this be?

MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS 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 MISTRESS QUICKLY, ANNE PAGE, 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.
Elves, 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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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.

PISTOL

But those as sleep and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.
About, about;
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.
Strew good luck, sprites, on every sacred room,
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
Worthy the owner, and the owner it.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Away; disperse! But till 'tis one o'clock,
Our dance of custom round about the pool
Of Herne the hunter, let us not forget.
Pray you, lock hand in hand; yourselves in order set
And twenty glow-worms shall our lanterns light,

To guide our measure round about the night.
But, stay; [*fart*] I smell a man of middle-earth.

FALSTAFF

Heavens defend me from that fairy!

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.

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.

SONG.

MISTRESS QUICKLY: Fie on sinful fantasy!

ALL: 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 villainy;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
Pinch him for his villainy;
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 Robin, disguised in white; FENTON comes and steals away ANNE PAGE. All the Fairies run away. FALSTAFF pulls off his buck's head, and rises.

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

I pray you, come, hold up the jest no higher.
Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?

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.

MISTRESS 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.

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.

MISTRESS PAGE

Why Sir John, do you think, though we would have 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?

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

A puffed man?

PAGE

Old, cold, withered and of intolerable entrails?

FORD

And one that is as slanderous as Satan?

PAGE

And as poor as Job?

FORD

And as wicked as his wife?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

NYM

A decreasing leg?

PISTOL

An increasing belly?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Your chin double?

MISTRESS PAGE

Your wit single?

MISTRESS FORD

And every part about you blasted with antiquity?

FALSTAFF

Well, I am your theme. You have the start of me; I am dejected.

FORD

Marry, sir, we'll bring you back 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.

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 Doctor Caius hath married her daughter.

MISTRESS PAGE

[Aside] Doctors doubt that. If Anne Page be my daughter, she is, by this, Master Fenton's wife.

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS with Robin, exposed

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

Why, did you take her in white?

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

PAGE

My heart misgives me.

Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE

How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE

Pardon, good father!

PAGE

Now, mistress, how chance you went not with Doctor Caius?

FENTON

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.

FORD

Stand not amazed, Master Page; here is no remedy.
In love the heavens themselves do guide the state;

Money buys lands, but wives are sold by fate.

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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.

FORD

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

ALL

Hurrah!

Exeunt