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It is hard to imagine a world without Shakespeare. Since their composition four hundred years ago, Shakespeare’s plays and poems have traveled the globe, inviting those who see and read his works to make them their own.

Readers of the New Folger Editions are part of this ongoing process of “taking up Shakespeare,” finding our own thoughts and feelings in language that strikes us as old or unusual and, for that very reason, new. We still struggle to keep up with a writer who could think a mile a minute, whose words paint pictures that shift like clouds. These expertly edited texts are presented to the public as a resource for study, artistic adaptation, and enjoyment. By making the classic texts of the New Folger Editions available in electronic form as Folger Digital Texts, we place a trusted resource in the hands of anyone who wants them.

The New Folger Editions of Shakespeare’s plays, which are the basis for the texts realized here in digital form, are special because of their origin. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, is the single greatest documentary source of Shakespeare’s works. An unparalleled collection of early modern books, manuscripts, and artwork connected to Shakespeare, the Folger’s holdings have been consulted extensively in the preparation of these texts. The Editions also reflect the expertise gained through the regular performance of Shakespeare’s works in the Folger’s Elizabethan Theater.

I want to express my deep thanks to editors Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for creating these indispensable editions of Shakespeare’s works, which incorporate the best of textual scholarship with a richness of commentary that is both inspired and engaging. Readers who want to know more about Shakespeare and his plays can follow the paths these distinguished scholars have tread by visiting the Folger either in-person or online, where a range of physical and digital resources exists to supplement the material in these texts. I commend to you these words, and hope that they inspire.

Michael Witmore
Director, Folger Shakespeare Library
Until now, with the release of the Folger Digital Texts, readers in search of a free online text of Shakespeare’s plays had to be content primarily with using the Moby™ Text, which reproduces a late-nineteenth century version of the plays. What is the difference? Many ordinary readers assume that there is a single text for the plays: what Shakespeare wrote. But Shakespeare’s plays were not published the way modern novels or plays are published today: as a single, authoritative text. In some cases, the plays have come down to us in multiple published versions, represented by various Quartos (Qq) and by the great collection put together by his colleagues in 1623, called the First Folio (F). There are, for example, three very different versions of *Hamlet*, two of *King Lear*, *Henry V*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and others. Editors choose which version to use as their base text, and then amend that text with words, lines or speech prefixes from the other versions that, in their judgment, make for a better or more accurate text.

Other editorial decisions involve choices about whether an unfamiliar word could be understood in light of other writings of the period or whether it should be changed; decisions about words that made it into Shakespeare’s text by accident through four hundred years of printings and misprinting; and even decisions based on cultural preference and taste. When the Moby™ Text was created, for example, it was deemed “improper” and “indecent” for Miranda to chastise Caliban for having attempted to rape her. (See *The Tempest*, 1.2: “Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee…”). All Shakespeare editors at the time took the speech away from her and gave it to her father, Prospero.

The editors of the Moby™ Shakespeare produced their text long before scholars fully understood the proper grounds on which to make the thousands of decisions that Shakespeare editors face. The Folger Library Shakespeare Editions, on which the Folger Digital Texts depend, make this editorial process as nearly transparent as is possible, in contrast to older texts, like the Moby™, which hide editorial interventions. The reader of the Folger Shakespeare knows where the text has been altered because editorial interventions are signaled by square brackets (for example, from *Othello*: “[If she in chains of magic were not bound,]”), half-square brackets (for example, from *Henry V*: “With [blood] and sword and fire to win your right.”), or angle brackets (for example, from *Hamlet*: “O farewell, [indeed].”)

**Textual Introduction**

*By Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine*
Because the Folger Digital Texts are edited in accord with twenty-first century knowledge about Shakespeare’s texts, the Folger here provides them to readers, scholars, teachers, actors, directors, and students, free of charge, confident of their quality as texts of the plays and pleased to be able to make this contribution to the study and enjoyment of Shakespeare.
In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, fat, disreputable Sir John Falstaff pursues two housewives, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, who outwit and humiliate him instead. Meanwhile, three suitors seek the hand of Anne Page, Mistress Page’s daughter.

Falstaff hopes to seduce the wives so he can gain access to their husbands’ wealth. Ford learns of Falstaff’s approaches and is consumed by jealousy. In disguise, he befriends Falstaff to learn about Mistress Ford’s behavior. The wives, however, trick Falstaff and Ford. As Falstaff visits Mistress Ford, Mistress Page announces that Ford is coming. Falstaff hides in a basket of dirty laundry and is thrown in the river.

Another visit ends similarly: Falstaff disguises himself as “the fat woman of Brentford,” whom Ford hates. Ford beats “her” in anger. Finally, Falstaff is lured to a comical nighttime rendezvous where all of Windsor comes together, Falstaff is publicly humiliated, and Ford admits his folly. Two of Anne Page’s suitors elope with boys in disguise while Anne marries her chosen suitor, Fenton.
Characters in the Play

MISTRESS FORD
FORD, her husband

MISTRESS PAGE
PAGE, her husband
ANNE, their daughter
WILLIAM, their son

DOCTOR CAIUS, a French doctor, suitor to Anne Page
MISTRESS QUICKLY, the doctor’s housekeeper
JOHN RUGBY, the doctor’s manservant

SIR HUGH Evans, a Welsh parson

HOST of the Garter Inn

Windsor Children, disguised as fairies

Sir John FALSTAFF, an impoverished knight
ROBIN, his page
BARDOLPH

Falstaff’s servants

FENTON, a gentleman, suitor to Anne Page

Robert SHALLOW, a visiting justice of the peace
Abraham SLENDER, his nephew, a young gentleman suitor to Anne Page

SIMPLE, Slender’s servant
Enter Justice 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 Custalorum.

SLENDER Ay, and Ratolorum too; and a gentleman born, Master Parson, who writes himself “Armigero” in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation—

“Armigero!”

SHALLOW 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 luces in their coat.

SHALLOW It is an old coat.

SIR HUGH The dozen white louses do become an old coat well. It agrees well, passant. It is a familiar beast to man and signifies love.

SHALLOW The luce is the fresh fish. The salt fish is an old coat.

SLENDER I may quarter, coz.
SHALLOW   You may, by marrying.
SIR HUGH   It is marring indeed, if he quarter it.
SHALLOW   Not a whit.
SIR HUGH   Yes, by 'r Lady. If he has a quarter of your coat, there is but three skirts for yourself, in my simple conjectures. But 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   It is not meet the Council hear a riot. There is no fear of God in a riot. The Council, look you, shall desire to hear the fear of God, and not to hear a riot. Take your visaments in that.
SHALLOW   Ha! O' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it.
SIR HUGH   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 Thomas Page, which is pretty virginity.
SLENDER   Mistress Anne Page? She has brown hair and speaks small like a woman?
SIR HUGH   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 (God deliver to a joyful resurrections!) give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old. It were a goot motion if we leave our prubbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.
SLENDER   Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?
SIR HUGH   Ay, and her father is make her a petter penny.
SLENDER    I know the young gentlewoman. She has
good gifts.

SIR HUGH   Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is
goats gifts.

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

SIR HUGH   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. \(He knocks.\) What ho?
Got pless your house here.

PAGE, \(within\)    Who's there?

SIR HUGH   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.

Enter Master Page.

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.

PAGE    Sir, I thank you.

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

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.

PAGE    It could not be judged, sir.

SLENDER   You'll not confess, you'll not confess.

SHALLOW   That he will not. 'Tis your fault, 'tis your
fault. 'Tis a good dog.

PAGE    A cur, sir.
SHALLOW  Sir, he’s a good dog and a fair dog. Can there be more said? He is good and fair. Is Sir John Falstaff here?

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

SIR HUGH It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

SHALLOW He hath wronged me, Master Page.

PAGE    Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

SHALLOW If it be confessed, it is not redressed. 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.


PAGE    Here comes Sir John.

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. 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 Pauca verba, Sir John, good 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.

BARDOLPH You Banbury cheese!

SLENDER    Ay, it is no matter.

PISTOL   How now, Mephostophilus?
The Merry Wives of Windsor

ACT 1. SC. 1

NYM  Slice, I say! Pauca, pauca. Slice, that’s my humor.  
SLENDER (to Shallow) Where’s Simple, my man? Can you tell, cousin?  
SIR HUGH  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.  
PAGE  We three to hear it and end it between them.  
SIR HUGH  Fery goot. I will make a prief of it in my notebook, and we will afterwards 'ork upon the cause with as great discreetly as we can.  
FALSTAFF  Pistol.  
PISTOL  He hears with ears.  
SIR HUGH  The tevil and his tam! What phrase is this, "He hears with ear"? Why, it is affectations.  
FALSTAFF  Pistol, did you pick Master Slender’s purse?  
SLENDER  Ay, by these gloves, did he—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 twopence apiece of Yed Miller, by these gloves.  
FALSTAFF  Is this true, Pistol?  
SIR HUGH  No, it is false, if it is a pickpurse.  
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 (indicating Nym) By these gloves, then ’twas he.  
NYM  Be avised, sir, and pass good humors. I will say “marry trap with you” if you run the nuthook’s humor on me. That is the very note of it.
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.

FALSTAFF  He kisses her.

PAGE     All but Slender, Shallow, and Sir Hugh exit.

SLENDER  By this hat, 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 an
          ass.

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’l ne’er be drunk whilst I live again but in
          honest, civil, godly company, for this trick. If I be
          drunk, I’l be drunk with those that have the fear of
          God, and not with drunken knaves.

SIR HUGH  So Got ’udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

FALSTAFF  You hear all these matters denied, gentlemen.
          You hear it.

Enter Anne Page  with wine.

PAGE     Nay, daughter, carry the wine in. We’l drink
          within.  Anne Page exits.

SLENDER  O heaven, this is Mistress Anne Page.

Enter Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

PAGE     How now, Mistress Ford?

FALSTAFF  Mistress Ford, by my troth, you are very well
          met. By your leave, good mistress.  He kisses her.

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.
          All but Slender, Shallow, and Sir Hugh exit.

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 Allhallowmas last, a fortnight afore Michaelmas?

SHALLOW, to Slender 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 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 But that is not the question. The question is concerning your marriage.

SHALLOW Ay, there’s the point, sir.

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

Nay, Got’s lords and His ladies! You must speak positable, if you can carry her your desires towards her.

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

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

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

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 content. But if you say “Marry her,” I will marry her. That I am freely dissolved, and dissolutely.

It is a fery discretion answer, save the fall is in the ’ord “dissolutely.” The ’ort is, according to our meaning, “resolutely.” His meaning is good.

Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

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

Enter Anne Page.

Here comes fair Mistress Anne.—Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne.

The dinner is on the table. My father desires your Worships’ company.

I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

’Od’s plessèd will, I will not be absence at the grace. Sir Hugh and Shallow exit.

Will ’t please your Worship to come in, sir?
SLENDER No, I thank you, forsooth, heartily. I am very well.

ANNE The dinner attends you, sir.

SLENDER I am not ahungry, I thank you, forsooth. 

(To Simple.) Go, sirrah, for all you are my man, go wait upon my cousin Shallow. 

(Simple exits.) A Justice of Peace sometime may be beholding to his friend for a man. 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 I may not go in without your Worship. They will not sit till you come.

SLENDER 't faith, I'll eat nothing. I thank you as much as though I did.

ANNE 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' th' town?

ANNE 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 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.

[Enter Page.]

PAGE Come, gentle Master Slender, come. We stay for you.
SLENDER  I’ll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

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

SLENDER  Nay, pray you, lead the way.

PAGE    Come on, sir.

SLENDER  Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

ANNE    Not I, sir. Pray you, keep on.

SLENDER  Truly, I will not go first, truly, la! I will not do you that wrong.

ANNE    I pray you, sir.

SLENDER  I’ll rather be unmannerly than troublesome.

     You do yourself wrong, indeed, la!

     They exit.

Scene 2
Enter Sir Hugh Evans and Simple.

SIR HUGH  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  Nay, it is petter yet. Give her this letter

     (handing him a paper), 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.

     They exit.
Scene 3


FALSTAFF Mine Host of the Garter!
HOST What says my bullyrook? 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, Keiser, and Pheazar. 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.—Let me see thee froth and lime. I am at a word. Follow.

[Host exits.]

FALSTAFF Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade. An old cloak makes a new jerkin, a withered servingman 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?

[Bardolph exits.]

NYM He was gotten in drink. Is not the humor conceited?
FALSTAFF I am glad I am so acquit of this tinderbox. His thefts were too open. His filching was like an unskillful singer; he kept not time.
NYM The good humor is to steal at a minute’s rest.
PISTOL “Convey,” the wise it call. “Steal”? Foh, a fico for the phrase!
FALSTAFF 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?

PISTOL  I ken the wight. 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. 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, \( \text{aside to Nym} \)  He hath studied her will and translated her will—out of honesty into English.

NYM, \( \text{aside to Pistol} \)  The anchor is deep. Will that humor pass?

FALSTAFF  Now, the report goes, she has all the rule of her husband’s purse. He hath a legion of angels.

PISTOL, \( \text{aside to Nym} \)  As many devils entertain, and “To her, boy,” say I.

NYM, \( \text{aside to Pistol} \)  The humor rises; it is good.

Humor me the angels.

FALSTAFF, \( \text{showing two papers} \)  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 \( \text{oeillades} \). Sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

PISTOL, \( \text{aside to Nym} \)  Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

NYM, \( \text{aside to Pistol} \)  I thank thee for that humor.

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 cheaters 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,
And by my side wear steel? Then Lucifer take all!

NYM, [to Falstaff] I will run no base humor. Here, take the humor-letter. I will keep the havior of reputation.

FALSTAFF, [giving papers to Robin]

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 i’ th’ hoof, seek shelter, pack!
Falstaff will learn the [humor] of the age:
French thrift, you rogues—myself and skirted page.

Falstaff and Robin exit.

PISTOL

Let vultures gripe thy guts! For gourd and fullam
holds,
And high and low beguiles the rich and poor.
Tester I’ll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,
Base Phrygian Turk!

NYM I have operations which be humors of revenge.

PISTOL Wilt thou revenge?

NYM By welkin and her star!

PISTOL With wit or steel?

NYM With both the humors, I. I will discuss the humor of this love to Ford.

PISTOL

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

NYM  My humor shall not cool. I will incense Ford to
deal with poison. I will possess him with yellowness,
for the revolt of mine is dangerous. That is
my true humor.

PISTOL  Thou art the Mars of malcontents. I second
thee. Troop on.

_They exit._

**Scene 4**

*Enter Mistress Quickly and Simple.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY  What, John Rugby! (_Enter 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 anybody in the
house, here will be an old abusing of God’s patience
and the King’s English.

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 seacoal
fire. _('(Rugby exits.)' An honest, willing, kind fellow
as ever servant shall come in house withal; and, I
warrant you, no telltale 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  Does he not wear a great round
beard like a glover’s paring knife?

SIMPLE  No, forsooth. He hath but a little wee face,
with a little yellow beard, a Cain-colored beard.
MISTRESS QUICKLY A softly-sprited man, is he not?
SIMPLE Ay, forsooth. But he is as tall a man of his hands as any is between this and his head. He hath fought with a warrener.
MISTRESS QUICKLY How say you? O, I should remember him. Does he not hold up his head, as it were, and strut in his gait?
SIMPLE Yes, indeed, does he.
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—

"Enter Rugby."

RUGBY Out, alas! Here comes my master.
MISTRESS QUICKLY We shall all be shent.—Run in here, good young man. Go into this closet. He will not stay long. "(Simple exits.)" What, John Rugby! John! What, John, I say! Go, John, go enquire for my master. I doubt he be not well, that he comes not home. "(Rugby exits.)"

"(She sings.)" And down, down, adown 'a, etc.

Enter Doctor Caius.

DOCTOR CAIUS Vat is you sing? I do not like dese toys. Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet un boîtier vert, a box, a green-a box. Do intend vat I speak? A green-a box.
MISTRESS QUICKLY Ay, forsooth. I'll fetch it you. "(Aside.)" I am glad he went not in himself. If he had found the young man, he would have been horn-mad. "(She exits.)"

DOCTOR CAIUS Fe, fe, fe, fe! Ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m'en vais à la cour—la grande affaire.

"Enter Mistress Quickly with a small box."

MISTRESS QUICKLY Is it this, sir?
DOCTOR CAIUS Oui, mets-le à mon pocket. Dépêche,
quickly. Vere is dat knave Rugby?
The Merry Wives of Windsor

ACT 1. SC. 4

MISTRESS QUICKLY What, John Rugby, John!

[Enter Rugby.]

RUGBY Here, 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-j’oublié? Dere is some simples in my closet dat I vill not for the varld I shall leave behind. [He exits.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY Ay me! He’ll find the young man there, and be mad!

[Enter Doctor Caius.]

DOCTOR CAIUS O diable, diable! Vat is in my closet? Villainy! Larron! [(Pulling out Simple.)] 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’l ne’er put my finger in the fire, and need not.

DOCTOR CAIUS, ‘to Simple’ Sir Hugh send-a you?— Rugby, baille me some paper.—Tarry you a little-a while.

‘Rugby brings paper, and Doctor Caius writes.’

MISTRESS QUICKLY, ‘aside to Simple’ I am glad he is so quiet. If he had been throughly 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—

SIMPLE, ‘aside to Quickly’ Tis a great charge to come under one body’s hand.

MISTRESS QUICKLY, ‘aside to Simple’ Are you advised 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, ‘handing paper to Simple’ You, jack’nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh. By gar, it is a challenge. I will cut his troat in de park, and I will teach a scurvy jackanape 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.

‘Simple exits.’

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 goodyear!

DOCTOR CAIUS  Rugby, come to the court with me. \((\text{To Mistress Quickly.})\) By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door.—Follow my heels, Rugby.

MISTRESS QUICKLY  You shall have Anne—
\(\text{[Caius and Rugby exit.]}\)

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.

FENTON, \((\text{within})\)  Who’s within there, ho?

MISTRESS QUICKLY  Who’s there, I trow? Come near the house, I pray you.

\(\text{Enter Fenton.}\)

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 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, think’st 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 today. Hold, there’s
  money for thee. *(He hands her money.)*¹ Let me
  have thy voice in my behalf. If thou see’st her before
  me, commend me.

  MISTRESS QUICKLY  Will I? ’tis 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.

  FENTON    Farewell to your Worship.

  MISTRESS QUICKLY  Farewell to your Worship.

     *(Fenton exits.)*¹

  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?

  She exits.
Scene 1
Enter Mistress Page reading 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.

'She reads.'

Ask me no reason why I love you, for though Love use Reason for his precisian, he admits him not for his counselor. 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.

What a Herod of Jewry is this! O wicked, wicked world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age, to show himself a young gallant! What an unweighed behavior hath this Flemish drunkard
picked—with the devil’s name!—out of my conversation, that he dares in this manner assay me? Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What should I say to him? I was then frugal of my mirth. Heaven forgive me! 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 your house.

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 honor! MISTRESS PAGE Hang the trifle, woman; take the honor. 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? These knights will hack, and so thou shouldst not alter the article of thy gentry. MISTRESS FORD We burn daylight. Here, read, read. Perceive how I might be knighted. *(She gives a paper to Mistress Page, who reads it.)* 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 “Greensleeves.” 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! To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here’s the twin brother of thy letter. [(She gives a paper to Mistress Ford, who reads it.)] 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.

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. 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.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD      You are the happier woman.
MISTRESS PAGE      Let’s consult together against this greasy
knight. Come hither.      \[They talk aside.\]

Enter Ford \[with\] Pistol, and Page \[with\] Nym.

FORD      Well, I hope it be not so.
PISTOL
Hope is a curtal 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.
FORD      He loves the gallimaufry. Ford, perpend.
PISTOL
Love my wife?
With liver burning hot. Prevent,
Or go thou like Sir Acteon, 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, Sir Corporal Nym.—Believe it, Page. He
speaks sense.  

[He exits.]

FORD, \textit{aside}  
I will be patient. I will find out this.

NYM, \textit{to Page}  
And this is true. I like not the humor of
lying. He hath wronged me in some humors. I
should have borne the humored 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 humor of bread and
cheese. Adieu.  

[He exits.]

PAGE, \textit{aside}  
“The humor of it,” quoth he? Here’s a fellow
frights English out of his wits.

FORD, \textit{aside}  
I will seek out Falstaff.

PAGE, \textit{aside}  
I never heard such a drawling, affecting
rogue.

FORD, \textit{aside}  
If I do find it—well.

PAGE, \textit{aside}  
I will not believe such a Cataian, though
the priest o’ th’ town commended him for a true
man.

FORD, \textit{aside}  
’Twas a good sensible fellow—well.

[\textit{Mistress Page and Mistress Ford come forward.}]

PAGE, \textit{to Mistress Page}  
How now, Meg?

MISTRESS PAGE  
Whither go you, George? Hark you.  

[They talk aside.]

MISTRESS FORD, \textit{to 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 crochets in thy
head now.—Will you go, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE  
Have with you.—You’ll come to dinner,
George?  

[Aside to Mistress Ford.]

Look who
comes yonder.
Enter "Mistress" Quickly.

She shall be our messenger to this paltry knight.

Trust me, I thought on her. She’ll fit it.

You are come to see my daughter Anne?

Ay, forsooth. And, I pray, how does good Mistress Anne?

Go in with us and see. We have an hour’s talk with you.

[Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, and Mistress Quickly exit.]

How now, Master Ford?

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

Yes, and you heard what the other told me?

Do you think there is truth in them?

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.

Were they his men?

Marry, were they.

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

Ay, marry, does he. If he should intend this voyage toward 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.

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.

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, bullyrook? 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, bullyrook.

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

FORD  Good mine Host o’ th’ Garter, a word with you.

HOST  What say’st thou, my bullyrook?

         [The Host and Ford talk aside.]

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.

         [Shallow and Page talk aside.]

HOST, [to Ford]  Hast thou no suit against my knight,
         my guest cavalier?

         [Ford]  None, I protest. But I’l 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. [To Shallow and
         Page.]  Will you go, [ameers]?

SHALLOW  Have with you, mine Host.

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, stoccados,
       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.
Here, boys, here, here! Shall we wag?

Have with you. I had rather hear them scold than fight. [Page, Host, and Shallow exit.]

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 labor. If she be otherwise, ’tis labor well bestowed.

[He exits.]


I will not lend thee a penny.

Why then, the world’s mine oyster, which I with sword will open.

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 honor thou hadst it not.

Didst not thou share? Hadst thou not fifteen pence?

Reason, you rogue, reason. Think’st thou I’ll endanger my soul gratis? 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 honor? Why, thou unconfinable
baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the
terms of my honor precise. Ay, ay, I myself sometimes,
leaving the fear of God on the left hand
and hiding mine honor 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 honor! You will
not do it? You?

PISTOL I do relent. What would thou more of man?

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, goodwife.

MISTRESS QUICKLY Not so, an ’t please your Worship.

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 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 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, whose’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 attraction 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. Her husband has a marvelous 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 nayword, that you may know one another’s mind, and the boy never need to understand anything; 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. *(He gives her money.*) I am yet thy debtor.—Boy, go along with this woman. *(Mistress Quickly and Robin exit.)* This news distracts me.

PISTOL, *(aside)*

This punk is one of Cupid’s carriers.

Clap on more sails, pursue; up with your fights;

Give fire! She is my prize, or ocean whelm them all! *(He exits.)*

FALSTAFF  Sayst 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 with wine.*

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. *(He hands Falstaff the wine.)*

FALSTAFF  *(Brook)* is his name?

BARDOLPH  Ay, sir.

FALSTAFF  Call him in. Such *(Brooks)* are welcome to me that o’erflows such liquor. *(Bardolph exits.)*

Ah ha, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, have I encompassed you? Go to. Via!

*Enter Bardolph with Ford *(disguised as Brook).*

FORD, *(as Brook)*  *(God)* bless you, sir.

FALSTAFF  And you, sir. Would you speak with me?
FORD, [as Brook] I make bold to press with so little preparation upon you.

FALSTAFF You’re welcome. What’s your will?—Give us leave, drawer. [Bardolph exits.]

FORD, [as Brook] Sir, I am a gentleman that have spent much. My name is [Brook].

FALSTAFF Good Master [Brook], I desire more acquaintance of you.

FORD, [as Brook] 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 emboldened 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.

FORD, [as Brook] Troth, and I have a bag of money here troubles me. [He sets it down.] 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, [as Brook] I will tell you, sir, if you will give me the hearing.

FALSTAFF Speak, good Master [Brook]. I shall be glad to be your servant.

FORD, [as Brook] 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.

Ford, as Brook: There is a gentlewoman in this town—her husband’s name is Ford.

Falstaff: Well, sir.

Ford, as Brook: I have long loved her and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her, followed her with a doting observance, engrossed opportunities to meet her, fee’d every slight occasion that could but niggardly 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, meed I am sure 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?

Ford, as Brook: Never.

Falstaff: Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

Ford, as Brook: Never.

Falstaff: Of what quality was your love, then?

Ford, as Brook: 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?

Ford, as Brook: 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 warlike, courtlike, and learned preparations.

FALSTAFF  O, sir!

FORD, [as Brook] Believe it, for you know it. There is money. [(He points to the bag.)] 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.

FORD, [as Brook] O, understand my drift. She dwells so securely on the excellency of her honor that the folly of 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, 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 defenses, which now are too too strongly embattled against me. What say you to ’t, Sir John?

FALSTAFF, [taking the bag] 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, [as Brook] O, good sir!

FALSTAFF  I say you shall.

FORD, [as Brook] Want no money, Sir John; you shall want none.
FALSTAFF Want no Mistress Ford, Master "Brook;\(^1\) 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, "as Brook\(^1\) I am blessed 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, "as Brook\(^1\) 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,\(^1\) 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,\(^1\) shalt know him for knave and cuckold. Come to me soon at night. "Falstaff exits."

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 villainous 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,” “Wittoll,” “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 the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aquavitae 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!

He exits.

Scene 3

Enter [Doctor] Caius [and] Rugby.

DOCTOR CAIUS Jack Rugby.
RUGBY Sir?
DOCTOR CAIUS Vat is the 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    Villainy, take your rapier.
RUGBY     Forbear. Here’s company.

Enter Page, Shallow, Slender, and Host.

HOST    'God' bless thee, bully doctor!
SHALLOW    'God' save you, Master Doctor Caius!
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
    thy pass, thy puncto, thy stock, thy reverse, thy
distance, thy montant. Is he dead, my Ethiopian?
    Is he dead, my Francisco? Ha, bully? What says
    my Aesculapius, my Galien, 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
    world. He is not show his face.
HOST     Thou art a Castalion King Urinal Hector of
    Greece, my boy!
DOCTOR CAIUS    I pray you, bear witness that me have
    stay six or seven, two, 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?
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.

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, guest Justice. [(To Caius.)] A [(word,]

Monsieur Mockwater.

DOCTOR CAIUS “Mockvater”? Vat is dat?

HOST “Mockwater,” in our English tongue, is “valor,”

bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, then I have as much mockvater

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—[(He draws Shallow, Page,

and Slender aside.)] But first, Master guest, and

Master Page, and eke Cavaleiro Slender, go you

through the town to Frogmore.

PAGE Sir Hugh is there, is he?

HOST He is there. See what humor he is in; and I will

bring the doctor about by the fields. Will it do

well?

SHALLOW We will do it.

PAGE, SHALLOW, AND SLENDER Adieu, good Master

Doctor. [(Page, Shallow, and Slender exit.)]
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 farmhouse a-feasting, and
            thou shalt woo her. Cried game! Said I well?
DOCTOR CAIUS    By gar, me dank you vor 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.

They exit.
Scene 1

Enter [Sir Hugh] Evans ([with a book and a sword])
and [Simple] (carrying Sir Hugh’s gown).

SIR HUGH I pray you now, good Master Slender’s servingman
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 I most fehemently desire you, you will also
look that way.

SIMPLE I will, sir. [He exits.]

SIR HUGH 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
Melodious 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.

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〈Sings.〉

Melodious birds sing madrigals—
Whenas I sat in Pabylon—
And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sings madrigals.

〔Enter Simple.〕

SIMPLE Yonder he is, coming this way, Sir Hugh.
SIR HUGH 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 Pray you, give me my gown—or else keep it
in your arms.

Enter 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, aside Ah, sweet Anne Page!
PAGE God save you, good Sir Hugh!
SIR HUGH God pless you from His mercy sake, all of
you!
SHALLOW What, the sword and the word? Do you
study them both, Master Parson?
PAGE And youthful still—in your doublet and hose
this raw rheumatic day?
SIR HUGH There is reasons and causes for it.
PAGE We are come to you to do a good office, Master
Parson.
SIR HUGH Fery well. What is it?
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 What is he?

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

SIR HUGH Got’s will and His passion of my heart! I had as lief you would tell me of a mess of porridge.

PAGE Why?

SIR HUGH He has no more knowledge in Hibbocrates and Galen—and he is a knave besides, a cowardly knave as you would desires to be acquainted withal.

PAGE, to Shallow I warrant you, he’s the man should fight with him.

SLENDER, aside O, sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW It appears so by his weapons. Keep them asunder. Here comes Doctor Caius.

Enter Host, to Caius and Rugby.

[Doctor Caius and Sir Hugh offer to fight.]

PAGE Nay, good Master Parson, keep in your weapon.

SHALLOW So do you, good Master Doctor.

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

[Page and Shallow disarm Caius and Sir Hugh.]

DOCTOR CAIUS, to Sir Hugh I pray you, let-a me speak a word with your ear. Vererefore vill you not meet-a me?

SIR HUGH, aside to Caius Pray you, use your patience. 

(Aloud.) In good time.

DOCTOR CAIUS By gar, you are de coward, de Jack dog, John ape.
SIR HUGH, [aside to Caius] Pray you, let us not be
laughing-stocks to other men’s humors. I desire
you in friendship, and I will one way or other
make you amends. [Aloud.] By Jeshu, I will knog
your urinal about your knave’s cogscomb.

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 As I am a Christians soul, now look you, this
is the place appointed. I’ll be judgment by mine
Host of the Garter.

HOST Peace, I say, Gallia and Gaul, French and Welsh,
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. [To Caius.] Give me thy hand, terrestrial;
so. [To Sir Hugh.] 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. [To Page and Shallow.] Come, lay their
swords to pawn. [To Caius and Sir Hugh.] Follow
me, lads of peace, follow, follow, follow.

[Host exits.]

SHALLOW [Afore God,] a mad Host. Follow, gentlemen,
follow.

SLENDER, [aside] O, sweet Anne Page!

[Shallow, Page, and Slender exit.]

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

SIR HUGH This is well! He has made us his vloutingstog.
I desire you that we may be friends, and let
us knog our prains together to be revenge on this
same scall, scurvy, cogging companion, the Host of
the Garter.

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

SIR HUGH Well, I will smite his noddles. Pray you,
follow.

Sir Hugh, Caius, Simple, and Rugby exit.

Scene 2

Robin followed by Mistress Page.

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 heels?

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

Mistress Page O, you are a flattering boy! Now I see
you’ll be a courtier.

Ford.

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 weathercock?

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, he. I can never hit on ’s name. There is such a league between my goodman 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.  

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 willful Acteon, and to these violent proceedings all my neighbors shall cry aim.  

A clock strikes.  

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 Page, Shallow, Slender, Host, Sir Hugh Evans, Doctor Caius, and Rugby.

SHALLOW, PAGE, ETC.  Well met, Master Ford.

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.

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, \[to Page\]  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.

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.

FORD     I beseech you heartily, some of you go home with me to 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, Sir Hugh.

SHALLOW    Well, fare you well. We shall have the freer wooing at Master Page’s.

[Ford and Slender exit.]

DOCTOR CAIUS  Go home, John Rugby. I come anon.

[Rugby exits.]

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

[Ford, \[aside\]  I think I shall drink in pipe-wine first with him; I’ll make him dance.—Will you go, gentle?
PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, AND SIR HUGH  Have with you to  
see this monster.

They exit.

Scene 3
Enter Mistress Ford and Mistress Page.

MISTRESS FORD  What, John! What, Robert!
MISTRESS PAGE  Quickly, quickly! Is the buck-basket—
MISTRESS FORD  I warrant.—What, Robert, I say!

Enter John and Robert with a large buck-basket.

MISTRESS PAGE  Come, come, come.
MISTRESS FORD  Here, set it down.
MISTRESS PAGE  Give your men the charge. We must be  
brief.
MISTRESS FORD  Marry, as I told you before, John and  
Robert, be ready here hard by in the brewhouse,  
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.
MISTRESS PAGE  You will do it?  
MISTRESS FORD  I ha’ told them over and over. They lack  
no direction.—Be gone, and come when you are  
called.  
[John and Robert exit.]  
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.
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.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD  Do so.—Go tell thy master I am alone.

MISTRESS FORD  (Robin exits.) Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

MISTRESS PAGE  I warrant thee. If I do not act it, hiss me.  

MISTRESS FORD  Go to, then. We’ll use this unwholesome humidity, this gross-wat’ry pumipion. We’ll teach him to know turtles from jays.

Enter Sir John 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 blessèd 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, the tire-valiant, or any tire of Venetian admittance.

MISTRESS FORD  A plain kerchief, Sir John. My brows become nothing else, nor that well neither.
Falstaff
Thou art a tyrant 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 semicircled 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’s 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 lisping 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 deserv’st 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.

Falstaff
Keep in that mind. I’ll deserve it.

Mistress 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.

Mistress Ford
Pray you, do so. She’s a very tattling woman.

[Falstaff stands behind the arras.]
"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 forever!

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, with all the officers in Windsor, to search for a gentleman that 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. Be not amazed! Call all your senses to you; defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life forever.

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! 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 whiting time—send him by your two men to Datchet Mead.

**MISTRESS FORD** He’s too big to go in there. What shall I do?  

*Falstaff comes forward.*

**FALSTAFF** 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? *(Aside to him.)* Are these your letters, knight?

**FALSTAFF, aside to Mistress Page** I love thee. Help me away. Let me creep in here. I’ll never—

*Falstaff goes into the basket; they cover him with dirty clothes.*

**MISTRESS PAGE, to Robin** Help to cover your master, boy.—Call your men, Mistress Ford.—You dissembling knight! *(Robin exits.)*

**MISTRESS FORD** What, John! Robert! John!

*Enter Robert and John.*

Go, take up these clothes here quickly. Where’s the cowlstaff? Look how you drumble! Carry them to the laundress in Datchet Mead. Quickly! Come.

*Enter Ford, Page, Doctor Caius, and Sir Hugh Evans.*

**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?

*Robert and John* 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.

    

    "[Robert and John exit with the buck-basket.]"

Gentlemen, I have dreamed tonight; 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. "(He locks the door.)" So, now uncape.

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. "(He exits.)"

SIR HUGH    This is fery fantastical humors and jealousies.

DOCTOR CAIUS    By gar, ’tis no the fashion of France. It is not jealous in France.

PAGE    Nay, follow him, gentlemen. See the issue of his search. "(Page, Sir Hugh, and Caius exit.)"

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 carrion Mistress
MISTRESS PAGE  We will do it. Let him be sent for tomorrow eight o’clock to have amends.

[Enter Ford, Page, Doctor Caius, and Sir Hugh.]

FORD  I cannot find him. Maybe 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.

SIR HUGH  If there be anypody 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  Be gar, nor I too. There is nobodies.

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.

SIR HUGH  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.

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
Mistress Page and Mistress Ford exit.  

Page, to Caius and Sir Hugh Let’s go in, gentlemen.  

But, trust me, we’ll mock him. (To Ford, Caius, and Sir Hugh.) I do invite you tomorrow morning to my house to breakfast. After, we’ll a-birding together; I have a fine hawk for the bush. Shall it be so?

Ford Anything.

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

Doctor Caius If there be one or two, I shall make-a the turd.

Ford Pray you, go, Master Page.  

Ford and Page exit.  

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

They exit.

Scene 4

Enter Fenton and Anne Page.

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

Anne Alas, how then?

Fenton Why, thou must be thyself. He doth object I am too great of birth, And that, my state being galled 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 Maybe 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 wooed thee, Anne,
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value
Than stamps in gold or sums in sealèd bags.
And ’tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

Annie 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 talk aside.]

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 afraid.

Mistress Quickly, to Anne Hark ye, Master Slender
would speak a word with you.

Anne I come to him. (Aside.) This is my father’s choice.
O, what a world of vile ill-favored faults
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!

Mistress Quickly And how does good Master Fenton?
Pray you, a word with you. [They talk aside.]

Shallow, to Slender 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
goose 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 longtail, under
the degree of a squire.

SHALLOW  He will make you a hundred and fifty
pounds jointure.

ANNE   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.

[He steps aside.]

ANNE   Now, Master Slender.

SLENDER  Now, good Mistress Anne.

ANNE   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   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.

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.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

PAGE  She is no match for you.  75

FENTON  Sir, will you hear me?

PAGE  No, good Master Fenton.—

Come Master Shallow.—Come, son Slender, in.—

Knowing my mind, you wrong me, Master Fenton.

[Page, Shallow, and Slender exit.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY, to Fenton  Speak to Mistress Page.  80

FENTON

Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter
In such a righteous fashion as I do,
Perforce, against all checks, rebukes, and manners,
I must advance the colors of my love
And not retire. Let me have your good will.  85

ANNE

Good mother, do not marry me to yond fool.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY  That’s my master, Master Doctor.

ANNE

Alas, I had rather be set quick i’ th’ earth
And bowled to death with turnips!  90

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.  95

FENTON

Farewell, gentle mistress.—Farewell, Nan.

[Mistress Page and Anne Page exit.]
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 tonight Give my sweet Nan this ring. There’s for thy pains. *He gives her money and a ring.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY Now heaven send thee good fortune. *Fenton exits.*

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! *She exits.*

Scene 5
*Enter Sir John Falstaff.*

FALSTAFF Bardolph, I say!

*Enter Bardolph.*

BARDOLPH Here, sir.

FALSTAFF Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in ’t. *Bardolph exits.*

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. *’Sblood,* the rogues
slighted me into the river with as little remorse as
they would have drowned a blind bitch’s puppies,
fifteen i’ th’ 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! [By the Lord,] I should have
been a mountain of mummy.

[Enter Bardolph with cups of sack.]

BARDOLPH Here’s Mistress Quickly, sir, to speak with
you.

FALSTAFF Come, 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. [He
drinks.] 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, [to Bardolph] 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. [Bardolph exits.]

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-birding; 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,
         and then judge of my merit.
MISTRESS QUICKLY  I will tell her.
FALSTAFF  Do so. Between nine and ten, say’st thou?
MISTRESS QUICKLY  Eight and nine, sir.
FALSTAFF  Well, be gone. I will not miss her.
MISTRESS QUICKLY  Peace be with you, sir.
         [Mistress Quickly exits.]
FALSTAFF  I marvel I hear not of Master Brook. He
         sent me word to stay within. I like his money well.

Enter Ford disguised as Brook.

O, here he comes.
FORD, as Brook  God bless you, sir.
FALSTAFF  Now, Master Brook, you come to know
         what hath passed between me and Ford’s wife.
FORD, as Brook  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, as Brook  And sped you, sir?
FALSTAFF  Very ill-favoredly, Master Brook.
FORD, as Brook  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.

FORD, \textit{as Brook}\textsuperscript{1} What, while you were there?

FALSTAFF While I was there.

FORD, \textit{as Brook}\textsuperscript{1} 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, \textit{as Brook}\textsuperscript{1} A buck-basket!

FALSTAFF \textit{By the Lord,} a buck-basket! Rammed me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins, that, Master \textit{Brook,} there was the rankest compound of villainous smell that ever offended nostril.

FORD, \textit{as Brook}\textsuperscript{1} And how long lay you there?

FALSTAFF Nay, you shall hear, Master \textit{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 \textit{Brook,} I suffered the pangs of three several deaths: first,
an intolerable fright to be detected with a jealous rotten bellwether; 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 horseshoe! Think of that—hissing hot—think of that, Master [Brook.]

FORD, [as Brook] In good sadness, sir, 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-birding. I have received from her another embassy of meeting. ’Twixt eight and nine is the hour, Master [Brook.]

FORD, [as Brook] ’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. [Falstaff exits.]

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 half-penny 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.

[He exits.]
Enter Mistress Page, Mistress Quickly, and William.

MISTRESS PAGE  Is he at Master Ford’s already, think’st thou?
MISTRESS QUICKLY  Sure he is by this, or will be presently. But truly he is very courageous mad about his throwing into the water. Mistress Ford desires you to come suddenly.
MISTRESS PAGE  I’ll be with her by and by. I’ll but bring my young man here to school.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans.

Look where his master comes. ’Tis a playing day, I see.—How now, Sir Hugh, no school today?
SIR HUGH  No. Master Slender is let the boys leave to play.
MISTRESS QUICKLY  Blessing of his heart!
MISTRESS PAGE  Sir Hugh, my husband says my son profits nothing in the world at his book. I pray you, ask him some questions in his accidence.
SIR HUGH  Come on, sirrah. Hold up your head. Answer your master. Be not afraid.
WILLIAM  Two.
MISTRESS QUICKLY Truly, I thought there had been one number more, because they say “’Od’s nouns.”

SIR HUGH Peace your tattlings!—What is “fair,” William?

WILLIAM *Pulcher.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY Polecats? There are fairer things than polecats, sure.

SIR HUGH You are a very simplicity ’oman. I pray you, peace.—What is *lapis*, William?

WILLIAM A stone.

SIR HUGH And what is “a stone,” William?

WILLIAM A pebble.

SIR HUGH No. It is *lapis*. I pray you, remember in your prain.

WILLIAM *Lapis.*

SIR HUGH That is a good William. What is he, William, that does lend articles?

WILLIAM Articles are borrowed of the pronoun and be thus declined: singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, *hoc*.

SIR HUGH *Nominativo, hig, haeg, hog.* Pray you, mark: *genitivo, huius.* Well, what is your accusative case?

WILLIAM *Accusativo, hinc.*

SIR HUGH I pray you, have your remembrance, child. *Accusativo, [hung,] hang, hog.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY “Hang-hog” is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

SIR HUGH Leave your prabbles, ’oman.—What is the focative case, William?

WILLIAM O—*vocativo*—O—

SIR HUGH Remember, William, focative is *caret.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY And that’s a good root.

SIR HUGH ’Oman, forbear.

MISTRESS PAGE, *to Mistress Quickly* Peace!

SIR HUGH What is your genitive case plural, William?

WILLIAM Genitive case?
SIR HUGH  Ay.

WILLIAM  Genitive: horum, harum, horum.

MISTRESS QUICKLY  Vengeance of Ginny’s case! Fie on her! Never name her, child, if she be a whore.

SIR HUGH  For shame, ’oman!

MISTRESS QUICKLY  You do ill to teach the child such words.—He teaches him to hick and to hack, which they’ll do fast enough of themselves, and to call “whorum.”—Fie upon you!

SIR HUGH  ’Oman, art thou lunatics? Hast thou no understandings for thy cases and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish Christian creatures as I would desires.

MISTRESS PAGE, (to Mistress Quickly)  Prithée, hold thy peace.

SIR HUGH  Show me now, William, some declensions of your pronouns.

WILLIAM  Forsooth, I have forgot.

SIR HUGH  It is qui, quae, quod. If you forget your qui’s, your quae’s, and your quod’s, you must be preeches. Go your ways and play, go.

MISTRESS PAGE  He is a better scholar than I thought he was.

SIR HUGH  He is a good sprag memory. Farewell, Mistress Page.

MISTRESS PAGE  Adieu, good Sir Hugh.—Get you home, boy. (To Mistress Quickly.)  Come. We stay too long.

They exit.

Scene 2

Enter Sir John 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, compliment, and ceremony
of it. But are you sure of your husband now?

MISTRESS FORD He’s a-birding, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE, *within* What ho, gossip Ford! What ho!

MISTRESS FORD Step into th’ chamber, Sir John.

*Falstaff exits.*

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 *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.

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.
The Merry Wives of Windsor

ACT 4. SC. 2

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?

[Enter Sir John Falstaff.]

FALSTAFF No, I’ll come no more i’ th’ basket. May I not go out ere he come?

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS FORD There they always use to discharge their birding pieces.

[Enter Sir John Falstaff.]

MISTRESS PAGE Creep into the kiln-hole.

FALSTAFF Where is it?

MISTRESS 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 you in the house.

FALSTAFF I’ll go out, then.

FALSTAFF 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.

[Falstaff exits.]

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  Ay, 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 men
to carry the basket again, to meet him at the door
with it as they 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 men what they shall
do with the basket. Go up. I’ll bring linen for him
straight.

She exits.]

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.
We do not act that often jest and laugh;  
’Tis old but true: “Still swine eats all the draff.”

[She exits.]

[Enter Mistress Ford with Robert and John,  
who bring the buck-basket.]

MISTRESS FORD Go, sirs, take the basket again on your  
shoulders. Your master is hard at door. If he bid  
you set it down, obey him. Quickly, dispatch.  

[She exits.]

ROBERT Come, come, take it up.

JOHN Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

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

[They pick up the basket.]


FORD Ay, but if it prove true, Master Page, have you  
any way then to unfool me again?—Set down the  
basket, villain. [They put the basket down.] Somebody  
call my wife. Youth in a basket! O, you panderly  
rascals! 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.

SIR HUGH Why, this is lunatics. This is mad as a mad  
dog.

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

FORD So say I too, sir.

[Enter Mistress Ford.]

Come hither, Mistress Ford.—Mistress Ford, the  
honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature,
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. *He pulls clothes out of the basket.*

PAGE: This passes.

MISTRESS FORD: Are you not ashamed? Let the clothes alone.

FORD: I shall find you anon.

SIR HUGH: 'Tis unreasonable. Will you take up your wife's clothes? Come, away.

PAGE: *to the Servants* 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. *Robert and John empty the basket.*

PAGE: Here's no man.

SHALLOW: By my fidelity, this is not well, Master Ford. This wrongs you.

SIR HUGH: 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.

PAGE: 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 color for my extremity. Let me forever 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.

*Robert and John refill the basket and carry it off.*
MISTRESS FORD, [calling offstage]  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  Why, it is my maid’s aunt of Brentford.

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 th’ figure, and such daubery as this is, beyond our element. We know nothing.—Come down, you witch, you hag, you! Come down, I say!

[Ford seizes a cudgel.]

MISTRESS FORD  Nay, good sweet husband!—Good gentlemen, let him [not] strike the old woman.

[Enter Mistress Page and Sir John Falstaff disguised as an old woman.]

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

FORD  I’ll pratt her. [He beats Falstaff.] Out of my door, you witch, you rag, you baggage, you polecat, you runnion! Out, out! I’ll conjure you, I’ll fortune-tell you!  

[Falstaff exits.]

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!

SIR HUGH  By 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.
Let’s obey his humor a little further. Come, gentlemen.

‘Ford, Page, Caius, Sir Hugh, and Shallow exit.’

Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.
Nay, by th’ Mass, that he did not; he beat him most unpitifully, methought.
I’ll have the cudgel hallowed and hung o’er the altar. It hath done meritorious service.
What think you? May we, with the warrant of womanhood and the witness of a good conscience, pursue him with any further revenge?
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.
Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?
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.
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.
Come, to the forge with it, then shape it. I would not have things cool.

They exit.

Scene 3

Enter Host and Bardolph.

Sir, the Germans desire to have three of your horses. The Duke himself will be tomorrow 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.

They exit.

Scene 4

Enter Page, Ford, Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, and Sir Hugh Evans.

SIR HUGH ’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 honor stand,

In him that was of late an heretic, As firm as faith.

’Tis well, ’tis well. No more. Be not as extreme in submission as in offense. 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. 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.
SIR HUGH 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. 25

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 Forest,
Doth all the wintertime, at still midnight,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragged 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. 35

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?

MISTRESS FORD Marry, this is our device,
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us. 40

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?

MISTRESS 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, aus, 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 diffusèd 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.

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

MISTRESS PAGE The truth being known,
We’l all present ourselves, dis-horn the spirit,
And mock him home to Windsor.

FORD The children must
Be practiced well to this, or they’ll ne’er do ’t.

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

FORD That will be excellent. I’ll go buy them vizards.

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

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.

FORD Nay, I’ll to him again in name of Brook.
He’ll tell me all his purpose. Sure he’ll come.
MISTRESS PAGE

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

SIR HUGH Let us about it. It is admirable pleasures and
fery honest knaveries.

[Page, Ford, and Sir Hugh exit.]

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

[Mistress Ford exits.]

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-moneyed, and his friends
Potent at court. He, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.

[She exits.]

Scene 5

Enter Host and Simple.

HOST What wouldst thou have, boor? What, thickskin?
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, [within] How now, mine Host?

HOST Here’s a Bohemian Tartar tarries the coming down of thy fat woman. Let her descend, bully, let her descend. My chambers are honorable. Fie! Privacy? Fie!

Enter [Sir John] 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, my 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; like who more bold.

SIMPLE  I thank your Worship. I shall make my master glad with these tidings. 

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, to Host  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  Where is mine Host?

HOST  What is the matter, sir?

SIR HUGH  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 Colnbrook, 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. 

| He exits. |
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
Jamanie. By my trot, dere is no duke that the court
is know to come. I tell you for good will. Adieu.

[He exits.]  

HOST, to Bardolph]    Hue and cry, villain, go!—Assist
me, knight. I am undone.—Fly, run; hue and cry,
villain! I am undone. [Host and Bardolph exit.]  

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 cudgeled, 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 crestfallen as a dried pear. I
never prospered since I forswore myself at
primero. Well, if my wind were but long enough, 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 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 tell’st thou me of black and blue? I was beaten myself into all the colors 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’ th’ stocks, i’ th’ 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. ‘She gives him a paper.’ Good hearts, what ado here 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.  

They exit.

Scene 6

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 answered 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. 「He shows the Host a paper.」

Hark, good mine Host:
Tonight 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 dean’ry, 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 masked 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.

They exit.
Scene 1

Enter Sir John Falstaff and Mistress Quickly.

Falstaff Prithée, no more prattling. Go. I’ll hold. This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers. Away, 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. Mistress Quickly exits."

Enter Ford disguised as Brook.

How now, Master Brook! Master Brook, the matter will be known tonight or never. Be you in the park about midnight, at Herne’s oak, and you shall see wonders.

Ford, as Brook Went you not to her yesterday, 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 tonight I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand.

Follow. Strange things in hand, Master [Brook!]

Follow.

They exit.

Scene 2

Enter Page, Shallow, [and] Slender.

PAGE Come, come. We’ll couch i’ th’ castle ditch till we see the light of our fairies.—Remember, son Slender, my—

SLENDER Ay, forsooth, I have spoke with her, and we have a nayword 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.

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.

They exit.

Scene 3

Enter Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, [and Doctor] Caius.

MISTRESS 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.

MISTRESS PAGE Fare you well, sir.  

[Caius exits.]

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 heartbreak.

MISTRESS FORD Where is Nan now, and her troop of fairies, and the Welsh devil [Hugh?]

MISTRESS 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.

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. To the oak, to the oak!

They exit.

Scene 4

Enter [Sir Hugh] Evans and [boys disguised, like him, as] Fairies.

SIR HUGH 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 pid you. Come, come; trib, trib.  

They exit.
Scene 5

Enter Sir John Falstaff, wearing a buck’s head.

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! A fault done first in the form of a beast; O Jove, a beastly fault! And then another fault in the semblance of a fowl; think on ’t, Jove, a foul fault. When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do? For me, I am here a Windsor stag, and the fattest, I think, i’ th’ forest. Send me a cool rut-time, Jove, or who can blame me to piss my tallow?

Enter Mistress Page and Mistress Ford.

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 “Greensleeves,” hail kissing-comfits, and snow eryngoes; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here. [He embraces her.]

Mistress Ford Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

Falstaff Divide me like a bribed 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. [A noise of horns within.]
MISTRESS PAGE  Alas, what noise?
MISTRESS FORD  Heaven forgive our sins!
FALSTAFF  What should this be?
MISTRESS FORD AND MISTRESS PAGE  Away, away.

[The two women 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, Pistol, [Sir Hugh] Evans,
Anne Page [and boys, all disguised as] Fairies [and
carrying tapers.]

MISTRESS QUICKLY, [as Fairy Queen]
Fairies black, gray, green, and white,
You moonshine revelers and shades of night,
You orphan heirs of fixèd destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hobgoblin, make the fairy oyes.

PISTOL, [as Hobgoblin]
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, [aside]
They are fairies. He that speaks to them shall die.
I’ll wink and couch. No man their works must eye.

[He crouches down and covers his eyes.]

SIR HUGH, [as a fairy]
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.
MISTRESS QUICKLY, [as Fairy Queen] About, about!
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.
Strew good luck, aufs, 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.
The several chairs of order look you scour
With juice of balm and every precious flower.
Each fair installment, coat, and sev’ral crest
With loyal blazon evermore be blest!
And nightly, meadow fairies, look you sing,
Like to the Garter’s compass, in a ring.
Th’ expressure that it bears, green let it be,
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;
And Honi soit qui mal y pense write
In em’rald tufts, flowers purple, blue, and white,
Like sapphire, pearl, and rich embroidery,
Buckled below fair knighthood’s bending knee.
Fairies use flowers for their charactery.
Away, disperse! But till ’tis one o’clock,
Our dance of custom round about the oak
Of Herne the Hunter let us not forget.

SIR HUGH, [as a fairy]
Pray you, lock hand in hand. Yourselves in order set;
And twenty glowworms shall our lanterns be,
To guide our measure round about the tree.
But stay! I smell a man of Middle Earth.

FALSTAFF, [aside] Heavens defend me from that Welsh fairy, lest he transform me to a piece of cheese.

PISTOL, [as Hobgoblin, to Falstaff]
Vile worm, thou wast o’erlooked even in thy birth.

MISTRESS QUICKLY, [as Fairy Queen, to Sir Hugh]
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.
The Merry Wives of Windsor

ACT 5. SC. 5

PISTOL, as Hobgoblin

A trial, come!

SIR HUGH, as a fairy

Come, will this wood take fire?

Sir Hugh puts a taper to Falstaff’s finger, and he starts.

FALSTAFF

O, O, O!

MISTRESS QUICKLY, as Fairy Queen

Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!

About him, fairies. Sing a scornful rhyme,

And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.

Here they pinch him and sing about him, and Doctor Caius comes one way and steals away a boy in white.

And Slender comes another way; he takes a boy in green. And Fenton steals Mistress Anne Page.

FAIRIES sing

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 villainy.

Pinch him and burn him and turn him about,

Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

A noise of hunting is made within, and all the fairies run away from Falstaff, who pulls off his buck’s head and rises up. Enter Page, Mistress Page, Mistress Ford and Ford.

PAGE, to Falstaff

Nay, do not fly. I think we have watched 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?
"She points to the horns."

See you these, husband? Do not these fair yokes
Become the forest better than the town?

FORD, to Falstaff 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.

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. See now how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent when ’tis upon ill employment.

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

FORD Well said, Fairy Hugh.

SIR HUGH And leave you your jealousies too, I pray you.

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 frieze? ’Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese.
SIR HUGH: 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.

MISTRESS PAGE: Why, Sir John, do you think though we would have thrust 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?

SIR HUGH: And given to fornications, and to taverns, and sack, and wine, and metheglins, and to drinkings and swearings and starings, pripples 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.

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 pandar. 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 tonight 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.

MISTRESS PAGE, aside: Doctors doubt that. If Anne Page be my daughter, she is, by this, Doctor Caius’ wife.
Enter Slender.

SLENDER   Whoa, ho, ho, Father Page!
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!
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’ th’ church, I would have swunged him,
          or he should have swunged me. If I did not think it
          had been Anne Page, would I might never stir! And
          ’tis a post-master’s boy.
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.
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 “budget,” as Anne and I had appointed,
          and yet it was not Anne, but a post-master’s
          boy.
MISTRESS PAGE   Good George, be not angry. I knew of
                your purpose, turned my daughter into ‘green,’
                and indeed she is now with the doctor at the deanery,
                and there married.

Enter ‘Doctor’ Caius.

DOCTOR CAIUS   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.
MISTRESS PAGE    Why? Did you take her in green?
DOCTOR CAIUS    Ay, be gar, and ’tis a boy. Be gar, I’ll raise all Windsor.
FORD    This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

Enter Fenton and Anne Page.

PAGE    My heart misgives me. Here comes Master Fenton.—
         How now, Master Fenton!
FALSTAFF    I am glad, though you have ta’en a special
         stand to strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

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.
         Th’ offense 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 cursèd hours
         Which forcèd marriage would have brought upon her.

FORD, [to Page and Mistress Page]
         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.
         I am glad, though you have ta’en a special
         stand to strike at me, that your arrow hath glanced.

PAGE    Well, what remedy? Fenton, heaven give thee joy.
         What cannot be eschewed must be embraced.
FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS 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.

FORD

Let it be so, Sir John.

To Master [Brook] you yet shall hold your word,
For he tonight shall lie with Mistress Ford.

They exit.