

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS***SHALLOW**

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

SLENDER

5 In the county of Gloucester, justice of peace and 'Coram.'

SHALLOW

Ay, cousin Slender, and 'Custalourum.

SLENDER

Ay, and 'Rato-lorum' too; and a gentleman born, master parson; who writes himself 'Armigero,' in any bill, warrant, quittance, or obligation, 'Armigero.'

SHALLOW

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

SLENDER

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

SHALLOW

15 It is an old coat.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Shakescleare Translation

*SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS enter.***SHALLOW**

Sir ¹ Hugh, don't try to talk me out of it. I will take the case to the highest court in the land: if Sir John Falstaff had twenty times as much social status, I wouldn't let him abuse me, Robert Shallow, esquire ².

¹ "Sir" was sometimes used as a term of respect for a clergyman, as well as indicating that someone is a knight (as it does for Falstaff).

² The title "esquire" denotes someone with a high social status, ranking just below a knight.

SLENDER

You, who are a justice of the peace ³ in the county of Gloucester, and a judge with authority to try criminals ⁴.

³ A judge appointed by the Crown to hear minor criminal cases.

⁴ "Corams" were justices who had the authority to try a felon in court.

SHALLOW

Yes, nephew ⁵ Slender, and I'm also the principal judge ⁶ in the county.

⁵ "Cousin" in the original text is a general term of kinship. Shallow is actually Slender's uncle.

⁶ "Custalorum" is a mistake for "custos rotulorum," a name for "the keeper of the rolls," who was the principal justice in the county.

SLENDER

Yes, the principal judge ⁷.

⁷ "Rato-lorum" is another mistake for the term "custos rotulorum."

[To SIR HUGH EVANS] And he was born a gentleman, Master Parson ⁸. He signs his name "Esquire," whenever he signs an indictment, a warrant for arrest, a discharge from debt, or a contract, he signs "Esquire."

⁸ A parson is a member of the clergy in the Church of England; a parson may refer more specifically to a rector, someone who is in charge of a local parish.

SHALLOW

Yes, I do, and my family has done the same thing for the last three hundred years.

SLENDER

All his descendants before him have signed their name that way, and all his ancestors who come after him can do the same thing. ⁹ They can bear the coat of arms ¹⁰ that has the twelve white pikes ¹¹.

⁹ Slender continues to mix up terms, here getting "successors" (descendants) and "ancestors" backwards.

¹⁰ A coat of arms was a visual symbol, or emblem, belonging to and representing an aristocratic family.

¹¹ "Luce" from the original text was a name for a type of fish that is now commonly called a pike.

SHALLOW

It is an old coat of arms.

SIR HUGH EVANS

The twelve white pikes ¹² look very appropriate on an old coat of arms. They look extremely fitting. The pike is an animal that humans are well acquainted with, and it symbolizes love.

¹² The term "louses" used in the original text is Evans' comic error for "luses." Sir Hugh speaks with what is meant to be a stereotypical Welsh

accent—the source of many jokes throughout the play.

SHALLOW

20 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 EVANS

It is marring indeed, if he quarter it.

SHALLOW

Not a whit.

SIR HUGH EVANS

25 Yes, py'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
30 benevolence to make atonements and compromises between you.

SHALLOW

The council shall bear it; it is a riot.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SHALLOW

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

40 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

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SHALLOW

The pike is a fresh-water fish. An old cod¹³ lives in salt water.

SLENDER

I might divide my coat of arms into four pieces, cousin.

SHALLOW

You might, if you get married¹⁴.

SIR HUGH EVANS

He will definitely mar¹⁵ his coat, if he cuts it up into four pieces.

SHALLOW

Not at all.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Yes, I'm telling you. If he has a quarter of your coat, then there's only three quarters left for you, in my opinion, but it doesn't matter. If Sir John Falstaff has mistreated you, I'll be glad to act as a friendly intermediary to help make things right between you, since I work for the church.

SHALLOW

The council¹⁶ will hear about it. It's a disturbance of the peace.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It isn't appropriate for the church council to witness a disturbance of the peace. There's no fear of God in disturbing the peace. The council, I'm telling you, wants to see people fearing God, not disturbing the peace. I'm giving you fair warning.

SHALLOW

Ha! I swear, if I were young again, I'd use a sword to end this dispute.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is better to end disputes through friends, not through violence—and I have another idea in my mind¹⁷, which might perhaps be a sensible one. You know Anne Page, daughter of Master¹⁸ Thomas Page, who is a pretty young woman.

SLENDER

Mistress Anne Page? She has brown hair, and a high voice like most women do.

SIR HUGH EVANS

That's the very person I'm talking about. Her grandfather left her seven hundred pounds¹⁹ in cash, and gold and silver, on his death-bed—may God give him a joyful resurrection²⁰—which Anne will be able to take possession of when she turns seventeen. It would be a good idea if we stopped bickering and planned a marriage between Master Abraham²¹ and Mistress Anne Page.

¹³ *Shallow picks up on Sir Hugh's earlier reference to "an old coat." With his Welsh accent, Sir Hugh would pronounce "old coat" as "old cod"—another type of fish.*

¹⁴ *When two members of the upper class got married, they would combine their two families' coats of arms to create a single new coat of arms.*

¹⁵ *Sir Hugh mistakes "marrying" for "marring" (ruining something).*

¹⁶ *Shallow is referring to the Star Chamber, but Sir Hugh in the next line thinks he is referring to the local church council.*

¹⁷ *In the original text, Sir Hugh says "prain" for "brain," or mind.*

¹⁸ *"Master" is a term used to refer to a man of elevated social status, usually a gentleman or an esquire with property.*

¹⁹ *The pound is the British unit of currency.*

²⁰ *Sir Hugh refers to the Christian belief in life after death and the resurrection of the body.*

Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

SLENDER

Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound?

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SLENDER

I know the young gentlewoman; she has good gifts.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Seven hundred pounds and possibilities is goot gifts.

SHALLOW

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Knocks

SIR HUGH EVANS

65 What, ho! Got pless your house here!

PAGE

[Within] Who's there?

Enter PAGE

SIR HUGH EVANS

70 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.

PAGE

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

SHALLOW

75 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

80 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.

²¹ Here, "Master Abraham" refers to Slender.

SLENDER

Did her grandfather leave her seven hundred pounds?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Yes, and her father is going to give her a lot more.

SLENDER

I know the young gentlewoman. She has good qualities.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Seven hundred pounds and the possibility of getting more money are good qualities.

SHALLOW

Well, let's go see good Master Page. Is Falstaff there?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Will I lie to you? I hate liars as much as I hate people who say false things, or people who aren't honest. The knight, Sir John, is there--and I'm asking you, please listen to the people who are trying to help you. I will knock on Master Page's door.

SIR HUGH EVANS knocks on PAGE'S door.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Hello, there! God bless your house!

PAGE

[Offstage] Who's there?

PAGE enters.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Here's your friend the parson, and Justice Shallow, and here's young Master Slender, who perhaps might discuss something with you, if you like the sound of it.

PAGE

I'm glad to see you honorable gentlemen are doing well. Thank you for my venison ²², Master Shallow.

²² Venison is the meat of a deer.

SHALLOW

Master Page, I'm glad to see you, and I hope you enjoyed it! I wish your venison had tasted better, but the deer wasn't killed very skillfully. How is Mistress Page doing? And I thank you from the bottom of my heart!

PAGE

Sir, I thank you.

SHALLOW

Sir, I thank you. I promise, I do.

PAGE

I'm glad to see you, good Master Slender.

SLENDER

How is your light brown greyhound, sir? I heard that he lost the race at the Cotswold hills.

PAGE

The race couldn't be decided, sir.

SLENDER

You won't admit he lost, you won't admit it.

SHALLOW

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

PAGE

A cur, sir.

SHALLOW

90 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 EVANS

It is spoke as a Christians ought to speak.

SHALLOW

He hath wronged me, Master Page.

PAGE

95 Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

SHALLOW

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

PAGE

100 Here comes Sir John.

Enter FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, and PISTOL

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

105 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

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

Pauca verba, Sir John; goot worts.

SHALLOW

[*To SLENDER*] No, he won't. You're in the wrong, you're in
the wrong.

[*To PAGE*] It's a good dog.

PAGE

He's a low-bred dog, sir.

SHALLOW

Sir, he's a good dog, and a handsome dog. What more could
you want? He's good and handsome. Is Sir John Falstaff
here?

PAGE

Sir, he's inside, and I wish I could do something helpful to
mediate between you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Spoken like a Christian.

SHALLOW

He has mistreated me, Master Page.

PAGE

Sir, he does sort of admit it.

SHALLOW

If he has admitted it, he hasn't made up for it. Isn't that
true, Master Page? He has mistreated me, really he has, in
short, he has, believe me. Robert Shallow, esquire, says he
has been mistreated.

PAGE

Here comes Sir John.

FALSTAFF, BARDOLPH, NYM, and PISTOL enter.

FALSTAFF

Now, Master Shallow, you're going to complain to the king
about me?

SHALLOW

Knight, you have beat up my servants, killed my deer, and
broken into my [gamekeeper's](#) ²³ lodge.

FALSTAFF

But I didn't kiss your gamekeeper's daughter?

SHALLOW

Ha, what nonsense! You'll [answer](#) ²⁴ for what you've done.

FALSTAFF

I'll answer right away: I did do all that. Now I've answered
you.

SHALLOW

The court will know about this.

FALSTAFF

It would be better for you if [no one](#) ²⁵ knew about this.
People will laugh at you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

A few good words, Sir John, good words.

²³ A gamekeeper was in charge of caring for and protecting the animals kept to be hunted--like deer--on an estate.

²⁴ Shallow uses "answer" in the sense of "to take responsibility," but Falstaff in his next line uses "answer" in the sense of "to reply."

²⁵ Shallow uses "council" to mean "court," but Falstaff puns on his word with "counsel," something kept secret, or known only to a few people.

FALSTAFF

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

SLENDER

115 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

120 How now, Mephostophilus!

SLENDER

Ay, it is no matter.

NYM

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

SLENDER

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

125 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 EVANS

130 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 EVANS

135 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

140 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 two pence apiece of Yead Miller, by these gloves.

FALSTAFF

Good words! Good cabbage ²⁶. Slender, I hit you on the head. What is your complaint about me?

SLENDER

Well, sir, I do have a complaint in mind about you, and about your cheating scoundrels, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol.

BARDOLPH

You thin ²⁷ slice of cheese!

SLENDER

Well, it doesn't matter.

PISTOL

What's this, you devil ²⁸?

SLENDER

I said, it doesn't matter.

NYM

Slice ²⁹, I say! Fewer words, fewer words: slice! That's my mood.

SLENDER

Where's Simple, my servant? Do you know, cousin?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Be quiet, please. Now let's get this straight. There are three judges about this dispute, as I take it. There's Master Page, that is to say, Master Page; and there's myself, that is to say, myself; and the third judge is, last and finally, the host ³⁰ of the Garter Inn.

PAGE

The three of us will hear the case and put an end to this dispute between them.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Very good. I'll write up a summary of it in my notebook, and we'll work on this case later as sensibly as we can.

FALSTAFF

Pistol!

PISTOL

I hear you with my ears.

SIR HUGH EVANS

The devil and his mother! What kind of language is that, "He hears you with his ears?" That is so pretentious.

FALSTAFF

Pistol, did you steal from Master Slender's wallet?

SLENDER

Yes, I swear by these gloves, he did, and if he didn't, I'll never enter my own bedroom again. He stole seven four-penny coins ³¹, new coins, and two old shillings, that cost me two shillings and two pennies each from Yead Miller, I swear by these gloves.

²⁶ Falstaff makes fun of Sir Hugh's pronunciation of "words" as "worts," which are a kind of vegetable.

²⁷ Banbury cheeses were known to be thin; Falstaff is making fun of Slender's thin stature.

²⁸ Mephostophilus is a general name for the devil. It was also the name of the devil who visits Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's play Doctor Faustus, and may have been played by a thin actor.

²⁹ Nym picks up on Falstaff's reference to cheese, but may also be threatening to slice Slender with his sword if he doesn't stop talking.

³⁰ "Mine host" was a way of referring to the host, or owner, of a tavern or pub.

³¹ A groat was a coin worth four pennies; mill-sixpences are new coins.

FALSTAFF

Is this true, Pistol?

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

PISTOL

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

SLENDER

By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

NYM

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

SLENDER

155 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.

FALSTAFF

What say you, Scarlet and John?

BARDOLPH

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

BARDOLPH

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

SLENDER

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

So Got udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

FALSTAFF

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

*Enter ANNE PAGE, with wine; MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE,
following*

PAGE

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

Exit ANNE PAGE

SLENDER

O heaven! this is Mistress Anne Page.

FALSTAFF

Is this true, Pistol?

SIR HUGH EVANS

No, Pistol isn't a true man, if he's a pick-pocket.

PISTOL

Ha, you foreigner from the mountains! Sir John, my master,
I challenge this skinny coward ³² to a duel. Try to say no to
me! Try to say no, you piece of scum, you lie!

SLENDER

I swear by these gloves, it was him.

NYM

Be careful, sir, and behave properly. I'll tell you to get lost if
you start acting like a policeman and accusing me of
crimes--that's a fact.

SLENDER

I swear by my hat, the one with the red face [*Pointing to
BARDOLPH*] had my purse. Even though I can't remember
what I did when you got me drunk, still, I'm not a complete
fool.

FALSTAFF

What do you have to say to that, you red-faced ³³ man?

BARDOLPH

Well, sir, speaking for myself, I can tell you that the man got
so drunk that he lost the use of his five sentences. ³⁴

SIR HUGH EVANS

It's five senses. My goodness, how stupid he is!

BARDOLPH

And since he was drunk, sir, he was kicked out of the tavern,
and that's how things got out of hand. ³⁵

SLENDER

Yes, your language was incomprehensible ³⁶ then, too, but
it doesn't matter. I'll never get drunk again as long as I live
except with people who are honest and well-behaved,
because of this trick. If I get drunk, I'll get drunk with people
who are God-fearing, and not with drunken scoundrels.

SIR HUGH EVANS

By God, he is a virtuous person.

FALSTAFF

You see that they deny all these accusations, gentlemen,
you see.

*ANNE PAGE enters, carrying wine; MISTRESS FORD and
MISTRESS PAGE follow.*

PAGE

No, daughter, carry the wine inside, we'll drink inside.

ANNE PAGE exits.

SLENDER

Oh heaven! That's Mistress Anne Page.

³² A bilbo was a sword from Bilbao, Spain; by calling Slender a "latten bilbo" in the original text, Pistol points out that Slender is as thin as a blade. Latten is a yellow-colored brassy metal; yellow is a color symbolically associated with cowardice.

³³ Will Scarlet and Little John were two followers of Robin Hood, the legendary outlaw. Characters frequently allude to Bardolph's red (or scarlet) face.

³⁴ Bardolph mistakenly uses "sentences" for the five "senses." He implies that Slender was so drunk that he was incapacitated.

³⁵ Bardolph's phrase can also mean "he misinterpreted what happened."

³⁶ Slender doesn't understand the slang terms that Bardolph is using, and mistakes them for words in another language.

PAGE

How now, Mistress Ford!

FALSTAFF

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

Kisses her

PAGE

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

Exeunt all except SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR HUGH EVANS

SLENDER

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

Enter SIMPLE

SLENDER

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

SIMPLE

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

SHALLOW

190 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

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

SHALLOW

Nay, but understand me.

SLENDER

So I do, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

200 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.

PAGE

How are you, Mistress Ford?

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, I declare, it's very good to see you. Let me do
this with your permission, good lady.

FALSTAFF kisses MISTRESS FORD.

PAGE

Wife, tell these gentlemen that they are welcome here.
Come on, we have a hot meat pie for dinner: come on,
gentlemen, I hope we'll forget all this unpleasantness over
drinks.

*All characters exit except SHALLOW, SLENDER, and SIR
HUGH EVANS.*

SLENDER

I'd give forty shillings³⁷ to have my Book of Songs and
Sonnets³⁸ with me.

SIMPLE enters.

SLENDER

Hello there, Simple! Where have you been? I should be my
own servant, is that it? You don't have the Book of Riddles
with you, do you?

SIMPLE

Book of Riddles! Why, didn't you lend it to Alice Shortcake
last All Saint's Day³⁹, fourteen days before Michaelmas?

SHALLOW

Come on, cousin, come on, cousin, we're waiting for you.
Let me have a word with you, cousin. Well, it's like this,
cousin: Sir Hugh is going to make an indirect proposal, a
proposal of some kind. Do you understand what I'm
saying?

SLENDER

Yes, sir, you'll see that I'll behave reasonably⁴⁰. If the
proposal is reasonable, I'll be reasonable too.

SHALLOW

No, try to understand what I'm saying.

SLENDER

I do, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Listen to his idea, Master Slender. I'll describe what's going
on to you, if you're capable of understanding it.

SLENDER

No, really, I'll do what my cousin Shallow tells me to do,
please, excuse me. Even though I'm foolish, I do know that
he's a judge in this county.

³⁷ A shilling is a British coin.

³⁸ Slender is likely referring to a well-known (and by Shakespeare's time, old-fashioned) collection of poems published in 1557, Richard Tottel's *Miscellany*. It contained many poems about love, which Slender wants to quote to Anne as a way of wooing her.

³⁹ "All-hallowmass," or All Saint's Day, is a feast celebrated on November 1st; Michaelmas is a feast celebrated on September 29th. Simple has his dates confused.

⁴⁰ Shallow in the previous lines was referring to the plan for Slender to marry Anne, which Sir Hugh is proposing to Anne's father. But Slender thinks that Shallow is talking about a proposal for how to make peace between himself and Falstaff.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SHALLOW

Ay, there's the point, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SLENDER

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SHALLOW

Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

SLENDER

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SHALLOW

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

SLENDER

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

SHALLOW

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

SLENDER

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SHALLOW

Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

SLENDER

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

But that's not what we're talking about: we're talking about your marriage.

SHALLOW

Yes, that's the idea, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Indeed, it is, that's exactly it, to Mistress Anne Page.

SLENDER

Why, if that's it, I'll marry her if the proposal is reasonable.

SIR HUGH EVANS

But can you love the woman? Tell us that with your own mouth or lips, for many thinkers say that the lips are part of the mouth. So, to be clear, can you have affection for the young woman?

SHALLOW

Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

SLENDER

I hope, sir, that I'll do anything that a reasonable person would do.

SIR HUGH EVANS

No, by God! You must give a positive answer, about whether you can have love for her.

SHALLOW

Yes, you must. Will you marry her, if her father gives her a good dowry ⁴¹?

SLENDER

I'll do a bigger thing than that, if you ask me to, uncle, if it's reasonable.

SHALLOW

No, try to understand me, understand me, good nephew. I'm doing this for your own good, nephew. Can you love the young woman?

SLENDER

I will marry her, sir, if you ask me to. But if we don't love each other very much at first, still, God may increase ⁴² our love as we spend more time together, when we are married and have more of a chance to get to know one another. I hope that spending time together will make us more content ⁴³; but if you say, 'Marry her,' I will marry her. I'm determined ⁴⁴ to do that, and resolutely ⁴⁵.

SIR HUGH EVANS

That's a very sensible answer, except for your mistake in using the word "dissolutely." The word is, the way we use it, "resolutely." That's the word you want.

SHALLOW

Yes, I think that's what my cousin meant.

SLENDER

Yes, or hang me!

⁴¹ A dowry was a sum of money given by a bride to her husband on the occasion of their marriage.

⁴² In the original text, Slender mistakes "decrease" for "increase."

⁴³ Slender mistakes "contempt" for "content."

⁴⁴ Slender mixes up "dissolved" with "resolved" (as in "deciding to do something").

⁴⁵ Slender mistakenly uses the word "dissolutely" in the original text for "resolutely" (with determination).

SHALLOW

Here comes fair Mistress Anne.

240

Re-enter ANNE PAGE

SHALLOW

Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

ANNE PAGE

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

SHALLOW

245 I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Exeunt SHALLOW and SIR HUGH EVANS

ANNE PAGE

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

SLENDER

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

ANNE PAGE

250 The dinner attends you, sir.

SLENDER

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

Exit SIMPLE

SLENDER

255 A justice of peace sometimes 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 PAGE

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

SLENDER

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

ANNE PAGE

I pray you, sir, walk in.

SLENDER

265 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 venes for a dish of stewed prunes; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since. Why do your dogs bark so? be there bears i' the town?

ANNE PAGE

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

SLENDER

270 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?

SHALLOW

Here comes pretty Mistress Anne.

ANNE PAGE re-enters.

SHALLOW

I wish I were a young man so that you might find me attractive, Mistress Anne!

ANNE PAGE

Dinner's on the table, and my father would like you good gentlemen to join him.

SHALLOW

I'll be there, fair Mistress Anne.

SIR HUGH EVANS

God bless me! I don't want to miss [grace](#) ⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Grace is a prayer said before a meal.

SHALLOW and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

ANNE PAGE

Will you come inside, good sir?

SLENDER

No, thank you, really, truly, I'm just fine.

ANNE PAGE

They're waiting for you to start dinner, sir.

SLENDER

I'm not hungry, thanks, truly.

[To SIMPLE] Go, young man, even though you're my servant, I want you to serve my cousin Shallow.

SIMPLE exits.

SLENDER

A judge can sometimes owe his friend for letting him borrow his servant. I employ only three adult male servants and one young male servant, and I will until my mother dies, but what does that matter? I still live like a someone who was born a gentleman.

ANNE PAGE

I can't go in without you, sir. They won't sit down to dinner until you come in.

SLENDER

Really, I won't eat anything. I thank you as much as if I were going to eat.

ANNE PAGE

Please, sir, come in.

SLENDER

I'd rather walk outside, thank you. I bruised my shin the other day when I was practicing sword-fighting with a fencing ⁴⁷ teacher. We played three rounds and the winner got a dish of stewed prunes, and, I'm telling you, I haven't been able to stand the smell of hot food since then. Why do your dogs bark so much? Are there bears in the town?

⁴⁷ Fencing is a sport of sword-fighting, with elaborate, formal rules, that was becoming popular in England in Shakespeare's time.

ANNE PAGE

I think so, sir. I've heard people talk about them.

SLENDER

I love bear-baiting ⁴⁸, but I'll object to it as soon as any other person in England. You're scared if you see a bear walking around, aren't you?

⁴⁸ Bear-baiting was a form of entertainment in Shakespeare's time,

in which a bear was tied to a post and attacked by dogs.

ANNE PAGE

Ay, indeed, sir.

SLENDER

275 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.

Re-enter PAGE

PAGE

280 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

285 Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

ANNE PAGE

Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

SLENDER

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

Exeunt

ANNE PAGE

Yes, indeed, sir.

SLENDER

That's a perfectly ordinary thing for me. I have seen
Sackerson ⁴⁸ loose twenty times, and I've grabbed him by
the chain. But, let me tell you, women cried and shrieked so
much at the bear, it was unbelievable. But you know,
women can't stand bears—they're very ugly, brutal
animals.

PAGE re-enters.

PAGE

Come on, good Master Slender, come on. We're waiting for
you.

SLENDER

I won't eat anything, thank you, sir.

PAGE

I swear, you must, sir! Come in, come in.

SLENDER

No, please, you go first.

PAGE

Come on, sir.

SLENDER

Mistress Anne, you should go first.

ANNE PAGE

Not me, sir, please, keep moving.

SLENDER

I'd rather be rude than cause trouble. You're not being fair
to yourself, really!

PAGE, ANNE PAGE, and SLENDER exit.

⁴⁸ Sackerson was a famous bear used for bear-baiting fights.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SIMPLE

Well, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Shakescleare Translation

SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE enter.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Get going now. Ask someone how to get to Doctor Caius's
house. A woman named Mistress Quickly lives there, who is
kind of his house-keeper, or his cook, or his laundry-maid.

SIMPLE

Well, sir.

SIR HUGH EVANS

No, this is a better idea. Give her this letter, since she is
someone who knows Mistress Anne Page well. The letter
asks her to persuade Mistress Anne Page to marry your
master. Please, get going. I will finish my dinner--there will
be apples and cheese later on.

come.

Exeunt

SIMPLE and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

Act 1, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter FALSTAFF, Host, BARDOLPH, NYM, PISTOL, and ROBIN

FALSTAFF

Mine host of the Garter!

HOST

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

FALSTAFF

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

HOST

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

FALSTAFF

I sit at ten pounds a week.

HOST

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

FALSTAFF

Do so, good mine host.

HOST

I have spoke; let him follow.

To BARDOLPH

HOST

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

Exit

FALSTAFF

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

BARDOLPH

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

PISTOL

20 O base Hungarian wight! wilt thou the spigot wield?

Exit BARDOLPH

NYM

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

Shakescleare Translation

FALSTAFF, HOST, BARDOLPH, NYM, PISTOL, and ROBIN enter.


FALSTAFF


My host of the Garter Inn!

HOST

What do you have to say for yourself, you fine fellow? Speak wisely and like a scholar.

FALSTAFF

Well, my host, I have to let some of my [followers](#)  go.

 *Knights were often accompanied by a group of followers, who were paid in exchange for service to the knight.*


HOST


Dismiss them, you handsome Hercules, dismiss them. Let them go their own way, trot, trot.

FALSTAFF

I spend ten pounds a week in rent.

HOST

You live like an emperor, a Caesar, a kaiser, and a [vizier](#) . I'll hire Bardolph. He'll tend the bar, he'll serve the drinks. Does that sound good, handsome Hercules?

 *Julius Caesar was a famous Roman general who took the title of emperor; a kaiser is a German emperor; a vizier, a Turkish ruler.*

FALSTAFF

Do that, good host.

HOST

I've said I'll do it. Let him work for me.

The HOST speaks to BARDOLPH.

HOST

Be sure to cheat customers by leaving a large head of foam on the beer, and sweeten bad wine to disguise the taste. I mean what I say--follow me.

The HOST exits.

FALSTAFF

Bardolph, follow him. Being a bartender is a good occupation. An old cloak makes a good new jacket, and a wrinkled old servant will make a good new bartender. Go, good-bye.

BARDOLPH

It's an occupation I've always wanted to have. I'll do well.

PISTOL

Oh, you lowlife beggar! Will you really serve drinks?

BARDOLPH exits.

NYM

His parents conceived him when they were drunk--isn't that some good irony?

FALSTAFF

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

NYM

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

PISTOL

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

FALSTAFF

Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

PISTOL

30 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

35 My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.

PISTOL

Two yards, and more.

FALSTAFF

40 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

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

NYM

The anchor is deep: will that humour pass?

FALSTAFF

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

FALSTAFF

I'm glad I got rid of that red-faced, bad-tempered man. He made it too obvious when he was [stealing things](#) ³; as a thief, he was like a bad singer, he didn't act at the right moment.

NYM

The trick is to be able to steal quickly, at a moment's notice.

PISTOL

Educated people call stealing "conveying." "Steal!" Ha! I don't care for that word at all!

FALSTAFF

Well, boys, I'm almost bankrupt.

PISTOL

Well, then, we'll have to have [sore heels](#). ⁴

FALSTAFF

I can't do anything about it. I have to cheat people, I have to use my wits to get by.

PISTOL

We have to eat somehow.

FALSTAFF

Does anyone know Ford, who lives in this town?

PISTOL

I know the man. He has a lot of money.

FALSTAFF

My good friends, I'll tell you what I'm about.

PISTOL

[Six feet](#) ⁵, and more.

FALSTAFF

No jokes now, Pistol! In fact, my waist is six feet around, but right now I'm not going to overindulge, I'm going to be thrifty. In short, I plan to seduce Ford's wife. I believe she would take me up on my offer. When she speaks, when she gestures, she seems like she's inviting me to approach her. I can interpret the meaning of her friendly actions, and the meaning of her behavior, if you translate it into English, is, "I want Sir John Falstaff as my lover."

PISTOL

He's studied her [desires](#) ⁶ and decided that they aren't honest. ⁷

NYM

That's a difficult plan. Will you be able to pull it off?

FALSTAFF

Now, everyone says that she has control of her husband's money. He has many gold [coins](#). ⁸

³ In Shakespeare's earlier play *Henry IV Part 1*, Falstaff supervises a band of pick-pockets, and sometimes steals things himself.

⁴ Pistol takes Falstaff's statement literally, that they will have sore heels if they can't afford shoes.

⁵ Pistol jokingly interprets Falstaff's previous line to mean "how wide I am around the middle," and responds accordingly.

⁶ Pistol puns on "will" as "desire" and "will" as a legal document, usually written in Latin, which would be translated into English.

⁷ "Honest," when used in reference to the wives, means "truthful," but most especially "sexually chaste" or "faithful."

⁸ An angel was a British coin. Pistol puns on the other meaning of angel as a beneficent spiritual being.

PISTOL

50 As many devils entertain; and 'To her, boy,' say I.

NYM

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

FALSTAFF

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

PISTOL

Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

NYM

I thank thee for that humour.

FALSTAFF

O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass! Here's another letter to her: she bears the purse too; she is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will be cheater to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me; they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both. Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to Mistress Ford: we will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

PISTOL

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

NYM

I will run no base humour: here, take the humour-letter: I will keep the havior of reputation.

FALSTAFF

[To ROBIN] Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly;
75 Sail like my pinnacle to these golden shores.
Rogues, hence, avaunt! vanish like hailstones, go;
Trudge, plod away o' the hoof; seek shelter, pack!
Falstaff will learn the humour of the age,
French thrift, you rogues; myself and skirted page.

Exeunt FALSTAFF and ROBIN

PISTOL

80 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

85 I have operations which be humours of revenge.

PISTOL

You should employ the same number of devils to help you-- and I say, "Chase her."

NYM

I see this plan taking shape. It's a good plan; go get that money.

FALSTAFF

I've written a letter to her, and I've written another letter to Page's wife, who also looked at me just now with lots of attention. She looked over my whole body with an expression of desire. Sometimes her gaze fell on my foot, sometimes on my plump belly.

PISTOL

Then the sun ⁹ shone on a pile of manure.

NYM

Thanks for that joke.

FALSTAFF

Oh, she looked over my body with such a greedy look, that her hot desire seemed to burn me up like the sun shining through a piece of glass ¹⁰! Here's another letter that I wrote to her. She also has control over her husband's money; she's like a region in Guiana ¹¹, full of gold and wealth. I will be like a treasury officer to them, and they will be like bank accounts ¹² to me. They will be sources of wealth to me, and I will get money from both of them. Go take this letter to Mistress Page, and you take this letter to Mistress Ford. We will do well, boys, we will make money.

PISTOL

Will I help Sir John arrange affairs ¹³ with these women and still carry a sword like a soldier? Then, the devil wins!

NYM

I won't behave dishonorably. Here, take the foolish letter. I will keep acting respectfully.

FALSTAFF

[To ROBIN] Hang on, servant, take these letters and keep them safe. Go to these women like my boat going to wealthy lands.

[To PISTOL and NYM] Scoundrels, get going, go on! Disappear like hailstones, go. Walk heavily, plod away on foot. Look for a new place to stay, get going! I'll learn the tricks you need to get by these days. I'll save money the way the French ¹⁴ do, you scoundrels. I'll only take care of myself and one well-dressed servant.

FALSTAFF and ROBIN exit.

PISTOL

I hope vultures eat your guts! False dice and loaded dice make good profits, and trick both rich and poor people. I'll still have sixpence in my purse when you have nothing, you lowlife slavish Turk! ¹⁵

NYM

I have a plan to get revenge on him.

⁹ Pistol plays on the image of Mistress Page's eye as a sun shooting out a beam and "gilding" Falstaff's foot.

¹⁰ A glass lens can be used to focus the sun's rays on a particular spot, and make it so hot that it catches fire.

¹¹ Guiana is a South American region known in Shakespeare's day for its wealth and abundant natural resources.

¹² The Exchequer is the British Treasury; exchequers can also be individual bank accounts. An escheater was an officer of the treasury; Falstaff puns on it to mean "cheater."

¹³ Pandarus of Troy was famous for arranging the sexual liaison between Troilus and Cressida. A pander is someone who arranges illicit sexual encounters for others.

¹⁴ French gentlemen were thought to have a small group of well-dressed followers instead of a large group of poorly maintained ones.

¹⁵ The Turks were the main military enemy of the Europeans in Shakespeare's day.

PISTOL

Wilt thou revenge?

NYM

By welkin and her star!

PISTOL

With wit or steel?

NYM

With both the humours, I:

90 I will discuss the humour of this love to Page.

PISTOL

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

NYM

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

PISTOL

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

Exeunt

PISTOL

Will you take revenge?

NYM

By the sky and the star, I swear I will!

PISTOL

With a clever plan, or by fighting him?

NYM

I'll use both! I'll go and tell Page about Falstaff's plan to
seduce his wife.

PISTOL

And I'll tell Ford how Falstaff, that disgusting liar, plans to
seduce his wife, steal his gold, and contaminate his bed.

NYM

My anger won't cool down. I'll make Page so mad that he'll
want to poison Falstaff, I'll make him jealous. This rebellion
of mine against Falstaff is dangerous for him: that's the
mood I'm in.

PISTOL

You are the bravest rebel.¹⁶ I'll follow your lead, go on.

PISTOL and NYM exit.

¹⁶ Mars was the Roman god of war. In this period, malcontents were often servants angry about mistreatment from their masters.

Act 1, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY, SIMPLE, and RUGBY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

Exit RUGBY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

SIMPLE

Ay, for fault of a better.

Shakesclare Translation

MISTRESS QUICKLY, SIMPLE, and RUGBY enter.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Hey there, John Rugby! Please, go to the window and see if
you can see my master¹, Master Doctor Caius, coming. If
he comes and finds anyone in the house, I'm telling you,
you'll hear him getting very angry and speaking very bad
English.²

¹ Here, "master" refers to the person who employs and pays a servant; it does not imply that the servant works for the master involuntarily, as a slave.

² Doctor Caius is French, and his heavy accent and poor English are a running joke in the play.

RUGBY

I'll go keep a lookout for him.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Go on. We'll have a nice hot drink³ later this evening, I
promise, when the fire is almost burnt out.

³ A posset is a drink made from wine or ale added to hot milk, usually with sugar and spices added.

RUGBY exits.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Rugby is as honest, hard-working, and kind a person as any
servant could work alongside, and I bet he won't tell on us
or make any trouble. The worst thing about him is that he
has a habit of praying. He's a bit foolish like that, but
everybody has some flaw--enough about that. Did you say
your name was Peter Simple?

SIMPLE

Yes, since I don't have a better name.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And Master Slender's your master?

SIMPLE

Ay, forsooth.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

20 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-coloured beard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

A softly-sprighted man, is he not?

SIMPLE

25 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

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

Re-enter RUGBY

RUGBY

Out, alas! here comes my master.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

35 We shall all be shent. Run in here, good young man;
go into this closet: he will not stay long.

Shuts SIMPLE in the closet

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

40 *[Singing]*
And down, down, adown-a, & c.

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS

DOCTOR CAIUS

45 Vat is you sing? I do not like des toys. Pray you,
go and vetch me in my closet un boitier 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.

50 *[aside]* I am glad he went not in himself: if he had
found the young man, he would have been horn-mad.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Fe, fe, fe, fe! ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je
m'en vais a la cour--la grande affaire.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And your master is Master Slender?

SIMPLE

Yes, that's true.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Doesn't he have a big beard that he trims into a round
shape, like the [knife](#) ⁴ a glove-maker uses?

⁴ *Glove-makers, or glovers, used
crescent-shaped knives to shape
leather for gloves.*

SIMPLE

No, in fact, he has only a tiny little face, with a little yellow
beard, a yellow or reddish beard.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

He's a timid person, isn't he?

SIMPLE

Yes, he is, but he's as brave as any other man around here.
He had a fight with a gamekeeper.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

What was that? Oh, I think I remember him. Doesn't he hold
his head up high, so to speak, and strut when he walks?

SIMPLE

Yes, indeed, he does.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, I hope Anne Page doesn't end up with anybody worse!
Tell Master Parson Evans that I'll do what I can for your
master. Anne's a good girl, and I wish--

RUGBY re-enters.

RUGBY

Oh no, get out! Here comes my master.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

We'll all get in trouble! Run in here, good young man. Get in
this closet [5](#), he won't stay here long.

⁵ *In Shakespeare's time, "closet"
could refer to a cabinet--where
valuables were often kept--or a small,
private room.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY shuts SIMPLE in the closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Hey there, John Rugby! John! Hey, John! Go, John, go ask
about my master. I'm afraid he isn't well, since he hasn't
come home.

[Singing]
And down, down, adown-a... [6](#)

DOCTOR CAIUS enters.

DOCTOR CAIUS

What are you singing? I don't like these silly songs. Please,
go and get me a green box from my closet, a box, a green
box. Do you understand what I'm saying? A green box.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Yes, I do, I'll get it for you.

[To herself] I'm glad he didn't go into his closet himself. If
he had found the young man hiding in there, he would have
gotten as mad as a bull.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Fe, fe, fe, fe! My gosh, it's very hot. I'm going to court--I have
important business there. [7](#)

⁷ *In the original text, Caius lapses
into his native French.*

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Is it this, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

55 Oui; mette le au mon pocket: depeche, quickly. Vere is dat knave Rugby?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

What, John Rugby! John!

RUGBY

Here, sir!

DOCTOR CAIUS

60 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'oublie! dere is some simples in my closet,
dat I vill not for the varld I shall leave behind.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

65 Ay me, he'll find the young man here, and be mad!

DOCTOR CAIUS

O diable, diable! vat is in my closet? Villain! larron!

Pulling SIMPLE out

DOCTOR CAIUS

Rugby, my rapier!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

70 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

75 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

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Is this the box you wanted, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Yes, put it in my pocket, hurry, quickly. Where is that rascal Rugby?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Hey there, John Rugby! John!

RUGBY

Here I am, sir!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Your name is John Rugby, and you are also a brave ⁸ man. Come on, get your sword, and follow me to court.

⁸ "Jack" is a nickname for "John," and also indicates someone who's brave.

RUGBY

It's ready to go, sir, out here in the hall.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Honestly, I'm lingering here for too long. Oh my God! I forgot! There are some medicines in my closet that I really don't want to leave behind.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[To herself] Oh no, he'll find the young man in the closet and get really mad!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Oh, you devil, you devil! Who is in my closet? Villain! Thief!

DOCTOR CAIUS pulls SIMPLE out of the closet.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Rugby, get me my sword!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Good master, stay calm.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Why should I stay calm?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

The young man is an honest person.

DOCTOR CAIUS

What would an honest person be doing in my closet? No honest person would come into my closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'm asking you, don't get so dull ⁹. Let me tell you what really happened. He came here to deliver a message to me from Parson Hugh.

⁹ "Phlegmatic" means "cold and dull." Mistress Quickly mistakes it to mean "angry."

DOCTOR CAIUS

Well.

SIMPLE

Yes, really, to ask her to--

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Be quiet, please.

DOCTOR CAIUS

[To MISTRESS QUICKLY] Stop talking.

[To SIMPLE] Tell me what happened.

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

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Writes

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

SIMPLE

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

You jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh; by gar, it is a shallenge: I will cut his throat in dee park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest to meddle or make. You may be gone; it is not good
110 you tarry here. By gar, I will cut all his two stones; by gar, he shall not have a stone to throw at his dog:

Exit SIMPLE

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

DOCTOR CAIUS

115 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

120 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. By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door. Follow my heels, Rugby.

Exeunt DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY

SIMPLE

I came to ask this good woman, your maid, to recommend my master to Anne Page as a potential husband.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

That's all, really! But I won't ever risk getting into trouble again by getting involved in things if I don't have to.

DOCTOR CAIUS


Sir Hugh sent you here? Rugby, bring me some paper. Wait here for a minute.


RUGBY brings paper and DOCTOR CAIUS writes a letter.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[To SIMPLE so that only he can hear] I'm glad he's so calm. If he had gotten really angry, you would have heard him be a lot louder and a lot more upset. But in any case, young man, I'll help your master as much as I can: and the upshot is, the French doctor, my master--I can call him my master, you see, because I take care of his house, and I wash the clothes, brew beer, bake, clean the house, prepare the food and drink, make the beds and do it all by myself--

SIMPLE

[To MISTRESS QUICKLY so that only she can hear] That's a lot of work  for one person to do.

 Simple's remark carries sexual innuendo, responding to Mistress Quickly's comment about the beds.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[To SIMPLE so that only he can hear] You're telling me that? You would find it to be a lot of work too: and you have to get up early and go to bed late, but anyway--*[Motioning him closer]* I'm telling you this as a secret, I don't want you telling other people about this--my master is in love with Mistress Anne Page himself. But in any case, I know how Anne feels--but that doesn't matter.

DOCTOR CAIUS

You fool, give this letter to Sir Hugh--by God, it's a challenge to a duel. I will cut his throat in the park, and I'll teach that good-for-nothing fool of a priest to go interfering in my business. You can get going, you shouldn't hang around here. By God, I'll cut off his testicles. By God, he won't have any left when I'm through with him.

SIMPLE exits.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Oh dear, he was only speaking on behalf of his friend.

DOCTOR CAIUS

That doesn't matter. Didn't you tell me that I would have Anne Page for myself? By God, I'll kill that scoundrel of a priest, and I've asked the host of the Garter to be the referee for our fight. By God, I'm going to have Anne Page myself.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, the woman loves you, and everything will turn out fine. We have to let people say foolish things. What the devil!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Rugby, come to the court with me. By God, if I don't get Anne Page, I will fire you. Follow me, Rugby.

DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY exit.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FENTON

[Within] Who's within there? ho!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

130 Who's there, I trow! Come near the house, I pray you.

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

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

FENTON

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

140 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

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

FENTON

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FENTON

Well, farewell; I am in great haste now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Farewell to your worship.

Exit FENTON

MISTRESS QUICKLY

You'll only make a fool out of yourself. No, I know how Anne feels, in spite of what Doctor Caius says. No woman in Windsor knows Anne better than I do, and no one is more able to persuade her than I am, thank goodness.

FENTON

[Offstage] Who's in there? Hey!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Who's there, I wonder! Come near the house, please.

FENTON enters.

FENTON

How are you, good woman? How are you doing?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'm doing better since you asked me how I'm doing, you good gentleman!

FENTON

What's the news? How is pretty Mistress Anne doing?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

To tell you the truth, sir, she is pretty, and faithful, and has good manners, and she likes you, I can tell you that, by the way. I thank God for that.

FENTON

Do you think I'll make any progress in persuading her to marry me? Will she reject me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

To tell you the truth, sir, everything is in God's control. But if we put that aside, Master Fenton, I'd swear on the Bible that she loves you. Don't you have a wart above your eye?

FENTON

Yes, in fact, I do--what about it?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, that's that, then: Anne is such an extraordinary person. But, I [detest](#) ¹¹, she's the most faithful woman that ever lived. We talked for an hour about your wart. I never laugh except when I'm with that girl! But to tell you the truth, she's a little too much in habit of being [sad](#) ¹² and brooding about things, but when it comes to you--well, get going now.

FENTON

Well, I'll see her today. Hang on, here's some money for you. Please take my side and say good things about me to her. If you see her before I do, say something nice about me.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Will I? Yes, I will, and I'll tell you more about the wart the next time we meet in private, and also about the other men who want to marry her.

FENTON

Well, goodbye. I'm really in a rush now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Goodbye, good gentleman.

FENTON exits.

¹¹ Mistress Quickly mistakenly says "detest" instead of "protest," which means to swear or claim strongly.

¹² "Allicholy" is Mistress Quickly's way of saying "melancholy."

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

Exit

MISTRESS QUICKLY

He really is a good man, but Anne doesn't love him. I know how Anne feels as well as anyone else does. Oh dear! what did I forget?

MISTRESS QUICKLY exits.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter MISTRESS PAGE, with a letter

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Reads

MISTRESS PAGE

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

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

20 What a Herod of Jewry is this! O 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

30 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

35 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!

Shakesclore Translation

MISTRESS PAGE enters, holding a letter.

MISTRESS PAGE

How can it happen that I didn't get any love-letters when I was young and beautiful, but I get them now? Let me read it.

MISTRESS PAGE reads the letter.

MISTRESS PAGE

"Don't ask me why I love you, because even though we use our brains to find reasons for being in love, people in love still don't listen to reason. You aren't young, but I'm not either; well then, we're alike in that way. You're merry, so am I; ha, ha! that's another way we're alike. You love wine, and I do too; could we be any more alike? Let it be enough, Mistress Page--at least, if a soldier's love is enough for you--just to know that I love you. I won't tell you to feel sorry for me, because that isn't something a soldier says, but I do ask you to love me. From me,
Your faithful knight,
By day or night,
Or at any time,
Who will fight for you,
With all his might, JOHN FALSTAFF"

What a **bragging scoundrel** this man is! What a wicked world we live in! This man who is so old that he is almost falling apart is flirting like a young man! What did this **drunkard** see me doing that made him think--the devil must have put the idea into his head!--that he dares to write me a letter like this? Why, he hasn't met me more than three times! What should I have said to him? I didn't flirt with him too much. God forgive me! Why, I'll demand that Parliament pass a law to suppress men. How can I get revenge on him? Because I'm going to get revenge on him, as sure his guts are made out of sausages!

MISTRESS FORD enters.

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page! Believe me, I was just on my way to see you.

MISTRESS PAGE

And, believe me, I was just on my way to see you. You look unwell.

MISTRESS FORD

No, I don't think so, I have something to prove that I don't.

MISTRESS PAGE

But really, I think you do look unwell.

MISTRESS FORD

Fine, I look unwell then, but I still say that I could prove that I don't. O Mistress Page, give me some advice!

A The original text refers to "sack," a type of Spanish wine.

A In the original text, Mistress Page refers to King Herod, a biblical figure who tried to kill Christ after his birth. In medieval dramas that staged biblical stories, Herod was traditionally played by a loud, showy actor.

A Flemish people were supposed to be heavy drinkers.

A Parliament is the legislative branch of the British government.

MISTRESS PAGE

40 What's the matter, woman?

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

45 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

50 We burn daylight: here, read, read; perceive how I might be knighted. I shall think the worse of fat men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of men's liking; and yet he would not swear; praised women's modesty; and gave such orderly and well-behaved reproof to all uncomeliness, that I would have sworn his disposition would have gone to the truth of his words; but they do no more adhere and keep place together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of 'Green Sleeves.' What tempest, I trow,

55 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

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

70 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

80 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 with; for, sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this

MISTRESS PAGE

What's the matter, woman?

MISTRESS FORD

Oh woman, if there weren't one small thing worrying me, I could acquire such a high social status!

MISTRESS PAGE

Forget about the one small thing! Take the social status. What is it? Don't worry about small things, what is it?

MISTRESS FORD

If I could just do something truly terrible, just for a minute⁵, I could have the status of a knight.

MISTRESS PAGE

What? You're lying! Sir Alice Ford! These knights might go around having sexual affairs, but that still doesn't mean you'd change your social status.

MISTRESS FORD

We're wasting time. Here, read, read, and see how I would be made a knight. I won't like fat men as much as other men, as long I'm able to judge men by their appearances--but still, he didn't swear, he praised the way that women aren't too sexually forward, and he criticized all inappropriate behavior with such careful, well-chosen words, that I would have sworn that his actions would correspond with his words; but they don't correspond at all.⁶

How on earth did this fat beast end up in our town? How will I get revenge on him? I think the best thing to do would be to lead him on and make him think that we'll accept his offer, until we can use his sexual desire as a weapon against him. Did you ever hear of anything like this?

MISTRESS PAGE

Word for word, these letters are exactly the same except that one has the name Page on it and the other has the name Ford! To make you feel better about Falstaff thinking, for some mysterious reason, that you are sexually promiscuous, look at my letter, which is exactly the same as yours. But you should accept his offer first, because, I swear, I never will. I bet he has a thousand letters just like this, with a blank space to put in different women's names--no, more than a thousand--and he's probably given them to many women before⁷. He must print them, undoubtedly, because he must not care what he publishes⁸, since he's willing to write these letters to us. I would rather be buried under a mountain⁹ than accept his offer. I bet you I could find twenty unfaithful turtledoves¹⁰ before I could find one man who could control his sexual appetite.

MISTRESS FORD

Gosh, these are exactly the same, the same handwriting, the same words. What opinion does he have of us?

MISTRESS PAGE

I have no idea. It almost makes me doubt my own chastity¹¹. I almost don't know who I am, because unless he knew something about me that I don't know myself, he would never have approached me like this.

⁵ *Mistress Ford uses the oxymoron "eternal moment" to imply that having a sexual affair with Falstaff would condemn her to an eternity in hell, even though the action itself would only take a minute.*

⁶ *The Hundredth Psalm is a poem in the biblical Book of Psalms. "Green Sleeves" was a popular love song. The biblical text wouldn't match well with a popular tune.*

⁷ *Mistress Page imagines the letters being published like a book, which has a second edition published when all the copies of the first edition have been sold.*

⁸ *"Press" could refer to a printing press and also has a sexual meaning, "to lie on top of someone."*

⁹ *In Greek mythology, the Titans were giants who rebelled against the gods and were buried under Mount Pelion as punishment.*

¹⁰ *Turtledoves were a symbol of fidelity, since they mate for life.*

¹¹ *Chastity is sexual faithfulness.*

fury.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

90 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

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

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

100 You are the happier woman.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

They retire

Enter FORD with PISTOL, and PAGE with NYM

FORD

Well, I hope it be not so.

PISTOL

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

FORD

Why, sir, my wife is not young.

PISTOL

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

FORD

Love my wife!

PISTOL

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

MISTRESS FORD

"Approach you," you say? I'll be sure to keep him far away from me. ¹²

¹² To "board" means to "approach" someone; it can also refer to a sexual encounter. Mistress Ford takes up the meaning of "board" as in "to board a ship," and continues the ship metaphor to indicate that she will keep him "above deck," or distant from her.

MISTRESS PAGE

So will I, if he tries to come near me. I'll never put myself in harm's way again. Let's get revenge on him. Let's set up a meeting with him, let's pretend to accept his offer and lead him on by delaying in a way that makes him even more excited, until he's pawned his horses to the host of the Garter Inn to get money to try to win us over.

MISTRESS FORD

Believe me, I'll agree to do any bad thing to him as long as it doesn't harm our own ethical integrity. O, if my husband saw this letter! it would make him jealous forever.

MISTRESS PAGE

Look, he's coming, and my husband's coming too. He's never jealous, just like I never give him any reason to be jealous, and I hope that will always be true.

MISTRESS FORD

You're luckier than I am.

MISTRESS PAGE

Let's come up with a plan together to get the better of this fat knight. Come over here.

They move to a far corner of the stage.

FORD enters with PISTOL, and PAGE enters with NYM.

FORD

Well, I hope it isn't true.

PISTOL

Then your hope misleads you. Sir John wants to seduce your wife.

FORD

Why, sir, my wife isn't young.

PISTOL

He goes after women with high social status and with low social status, both rich women and poor women. He wants both young women and old women, he doesn't care which, Ford. He loves all kinds of women. Ford, think about this carefully.

FORD

He loves my wife!

PISTOL

He loves her with a strong appetite. You need to stop him, or else you'll be a cuckold ¹³, and he'll be attacking you: oh, it's terrible to be called a cuckold!

¹³ A cuckold is a man whose wife has cheated on him. In Shakespeare's time, cuckolds were represented with horns on their foreheads. In Greek mythology, Diana punished the hunter Actaeon by turning him into a stag. Ringwood is a dog's name, referring to the dogs that attacked and killed Actaeon. The stag symbolizes the cuckold because both have horns.

FORD

115 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!

120 Believe it, Page; he speaks sense.

Exit

FORD

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

NYM

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

Exit

PAGE

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

FORD

I will seek out Falstaff.

PAGE

I never heard such a drawing, affecting rogue.

FORD

135 If I do find it: well.

PAGE

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

FORD

'Twas a good sensible fellow: well.

PAGE

140 How now, Meg!

MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD come forward

MISTRESS PAGE

Whither go you, George? Hark you.

MISTRESS FORD

How now, sweet Frank! why art thou melancholy?

FORD

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

FORD

To be called what?

PISTOL

A cuckold. Goodbye. Be careful, look out, because villains
will take your property when you're not looking. Take care,
before someone seduces your wife. ¹⁴ Let's go, Sir Corporal
Nym! Believe it, Page; he's speaking the truth.

¹⁴ The cuckoo was supposed to leave its eggs in the nests of other birds, allowing the other birds to go through the trouble of hatching its chicks. Its name, and the fact that it enters another's home secretly, made it a symbol for cuckolds.

PISTOL exits.

FORD

[To himself] I'll be patient, I'll investigate this.

NYM

[To PAGE] What I said is true. I'm not in the habit of lying.
Falstaff has mistreated me in certain ways. I was supposed
to bring the letter to your wife, but I have ways of getting
back at my enemies, and I'll use them when I have to.
Falstaff wants to seduce your wife, that's the long and the
short of it. My name is Corporal Nym. I'm saying this and I
promise that it's true. My name is Nym and Falstaff is after
your wife. Goodbye. I don't like how little food I have now ¹⁵
, and that's how I feel about it. Goodbye.

¹⁵ Bardolph complains about his low wages in Falstaff's service, or after being dismissed.

NYM exits.

PAGE

"How I feel about it," ¹⁶ he said! That's a man who can
hardly speak English.

¹⁶ In the original text, Nym uses the word "humor" to refer to almost every kind of thing, so that the word almost loses its meaning.

FORD

I'm going to go look for Falstaff.

PAGE

I've never heard anyone speak so slowly and so
pretentiously.

FORD

If I find out that what he says is true: well, then we'll see.

PAGE

I wouldn't believe anything that scoundrel ¹⁷ said, not
even if the town priest told me he was an honest man.

¹⁷ "Cataian" was a term for a Chinese person, also used offensively to refer to a scoundrel. This play is full of negative stereotypes of people from different countries.

FORD

He was an honest intelligent person. Well, we'll see.

PAGE

Hey there, Meg!

*MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD come to the front of
the stage again.*

MISTRESS PAGE

What are you up to, George?

MISTRESS FORD

How are you doing, sweet Frank! Why do you look sad?

FORD

Me, sad! I'm not sad. Go home, get going.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Aside to MISTRESS FORD

MISTRESS PAGE

150 Look who comes yonder: she shall be our messenger to this paltry knight.

MISTRESS FORD

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

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS PAGE

You are come to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and MISTRESS QUICKLY

PAGE

How now, Master Ford!

FORD

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

PAGE

Yes: and you heard what the other told me?

FORD

Do you think there is truth in them?

PAGE

165 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.

FORD

Were they his men?

PAGE

Marry, were they.

FORD

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

PAGE

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

FORD

175 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.

MISTRESS FORD

My goodness, you have some strange idea in your head. Hey, will you come with me, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

I'm coming. You'll come to dinner, George.

MISTRESS PAGE speaks aside to MISTRESS FORD

MISTRESS PAGE

Look who's coming. She'll take our message to that worthless knight.

MISTRESS FORD

[To MISTRESS PAGE so that only she can hear] Believe me, I thought of that too. She'll be just right for that.

MISTRESS QUICKLY enters.

MISTRESS PAGE

You're here to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Yes; and, tell me, how is good Mistress Anne doing?

MISTRESS PAGE

Come with us and see. We'll talk to you for a while.

MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and MISTRESS QUICKLY exit.

PAGE

What's going on with you, Master Ford?

FORD

You heard what that scoundrel told me, didn't you?

PAGE

Yes, and you heard what the other man told me?

FORD

Do you think they were telling the truth?

PAGE

Forget about them, those scoundrels! I don't think the knight would try anything like that: but the men that told us about his plan are a pair of men that he just fired. They're acting like scoundrels, now that they don't have work anymore.

FORD

They used to work for him?

PAGE

Indeed, they did.

FORD

That doesn't make me feel any better. Is Falstaff staying at the Garter Inn?

PAGE

Yes, he is. If he tried to seduce my wife, I would set her loose on him, and if she did anything other than scold him harshly, then I'd take responsibility for it.

FORD

I don't mistrust my wife, but I still wouldn't want to let them be alone together. A man can trust his wife too much. I don't want to be made a cuckold ¹⁸. I can't feel as calm about it as you can.

¹⁸ Ford does not want a cuckold's horns on his head.

PAGE

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

Enter Host

PAGE

How now, mine host!

HOST

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

Enter SHALLOW

SHALLOW

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

HOST

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

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' the Garter, a word with you.

Drawing him aside

HOST

195 What sayest thou, my bully-rook?

SHALLOW

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

They converse apart

HOST

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

FORD

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

HOST

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

SHALLOW

Have with you, mine host.

PAGE

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

PAGE

Look, here comes the talkative host of the Garter Inn. Either
he's had something to drink or he's gotten some money, he
looks so cheerful.

The HOST enters.

PAGE

How are you doing, [my host](#) ¹⁹?

¹⁹ Again, "mine host" is a term of
address for someone who owns or
runs a tavern.

HOST

How are you doing, my fine fellow? You are a gentlemen.
Oh, gallant Justice, I'm calling you!

SHALLOW enters.

SHALLOW

I'm here, my host. Good evening and I hope it will be twenty
times as good, good Master Page! Master Page, will you
come with us? We're about to see something entertaining.

HOST

Tell him about it, gallant Justice. Tell him, my fine fellow.

SHALLOW

Sir, there's going to be a fight between Sir Hugh the Welsh
priest and Caius the French doctor.

FORD

Good host of the Garter, let me talk to you for a minute.

FORD draws the HOST aside.

HOST

What do you want to talk about, my fine fellow?

SHALLOW

[To PAGE] Will you go with us to watch the fight? The host
will be the referee, and I think he's told them each a
different place to meet--because, believe me, I hear the
parson isn't a lightweight in a fight. Listen, I'll tell you what
our trick is going to be.

SHALLOW and PAGE talk in a far corner of the stage.

HOST

Are you sure you don't have any complaint to make about
the knight staying with me, my gallant friend?

FORD

None, I promise, but I'll give you two quarts of mulled wine
if you'll bring me to him and tell him my name is Brook, just
for a joke.

HOST

[Giving FORD his hand to shake] I promise, my fine fellow.
You'll be able to go out and come back again--are those the
right words ²⁰ to use?--and I'll say your name is Brook.
Falstaff is a merry knight. Will you go with me, gentlemen?

²⁰ The host is using fancy formal
Latin--"Egress" (to exit) and "regress"
(to go backwards)--which are not
really the right words to use.

SHALLOW

We'll come with you, my host.

PAGE

I heard the Frenchman is good at sword-fighting.

SHALLOW

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

HOST

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

PAGE

220 Have with you. I would rather hear them scold than fight.

Exeunt Host, SHALLOW, and PAGE

FORD

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

Exit

SHALLOW

That's nothing, sir, I could have told you more than that. These days, fighters in a duel rely on having distance between them, they use lunges, thrusts, ²¹ and I don't know what else. That's the essential part of fighting, Master Page; it's done like this, like this. [*He gestures*] I remember when I could use my long sword ²² to make you four brave men jump like rats.

HOST

Here, boys, here, here! Shall we go?

PAGE

Oh, if you want. I would rather hear them scold each other than have a real fight.

The HOST, SHALLOW, and PAGE exit.

FORD

Even though Page is a fool who trusts his wife too much, and is so confident about his wife's unreliable nature, still, I can't overcome my worries so easily. My wife spent time with Falstaff at Page's house; and I don't know what they got up to together there. Well, I'll investigate it more: and I have a disguise that I'll use to interrogate Falstaff. If I find out that my wife is faithful, I'm not wasting my time; if she's not faithful, then my efforts were put to good use.

FORD exits.

²¹ In the original text, "pass" and "stoccado" are technical fencing terms.

²² A long sword is a heavy, old-fashioned weapon compared with the lighter, more modern rapier used for fencing.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter FALSTAFF and PISTOL

FALSTAFF

I will not lend thee a penny.

PISTOL

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

FALSTAFF

5 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 geminy of baboons. I am damned in hell for swearing to gentlemen my friends, you were good soldiers and tall fellows; and when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I took't upon mine honour thou hadst it not.

PISTOL

Didst not thou share? hadst thou not fifteen pence?

FALSTAFF

15 Reason, you rogue, reason: thinkest thou I'll endanger my soul gratis? At a word, hang no more about me, I am no gibbet for you. Go. A short knife and a throng! To your manor of Pickt-hatch! Go. You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! you stand upon your honour! Why, thou unconfinable baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the terms of my honour precise: I, I, I myself
20 sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand

Shakescleare Translation

FALSTAFF and PISTOL enter.

FALSTAFF

I won't lend you a penny.

PISTOL

[*Drawing his sword*] Well, then I'll get money from you by force.

FALSTAFF

Not a penny. I didn't mind that you used my good reputation to get people to lend you money ¹. I bothered my friends until the officials let you and your friend Nym off the hook three times, and if I hadn't, you would have been trapped behind the bars of a prison cell like a pair of monkeys. I damned my soul by swearing to friends of mine that you were good soldiers and brave men, and when Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan ², I swore on my honor that you hadn't stolen it.

PISTOL

Didn't you get a share? Didn't I give you fifteen pence ³ for covering for me?

FALSTAFF

And you had a good reason to do that, you scoundrel, you had a good reason. Do you think I'd put my soul in danger for nothing? In short, don't hang around me anymore, don't try to pin ⁴ any more of your crimes on me. Go away. Find a short knife and a crowd of people! Go to Pickt-hatch ⁵! Go. You won't carry a letter to someone for me, you scoundrel! You claim it's because you have so much honor. Why, you unspeakably dishonorable person, even I sometimes have trouble keeping my honor pure. I, I, I

¹ Pistol told his creditors that he could use Falstaff's money to repay them.

² The handle of a fan was often made with valuable material, like ivory.

³ A pence is a British unit of currency.

⁴ A "gibbet" is another name for the gallows, where condemned people were hanged. Falstaff puns on the word "hang" here.

⁵ Pickt-hatch was a district of London infamous for its pickpockets and thieves.

25 and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge and to lurch; and yet you, rogue, will ensconce your rags, your cat-a-mountain looks, your red-lattice phrases, and your bold-beating oaths, under the shelter of your honour! You will not do it, you!

PISTOL

I do relent: what would thou more of man?

30

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

35 Good morrow, good wife.

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

40 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

45 There is one Mistress Ford, sir:--I pray, come a little nearer this way:--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

50 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?

myself sometimes, have to put aside my fear of God and sacrifice my honor when it becomes necessary. I have to cheat, use cunning, and steal, and yet you, scoundrel, try to cover up your rags, your wild looks, the words you learn at the tavern, and your brash swearing, by pretending to have honor! I won't allow it!

PISTOL

I give up. What more could you ask of anybody?

ROBIN enters.

ROBIN

Sir, there's a woman here who wants to talk to you.

FALSTAFF

Tell her to come in.

MISTRESS QUICKLY enters.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Good day to you.

FALSTAFF

Good day, good [wife](#) [6](#).

[6](#) "Goodwife" was a generic term for an older woman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'm not a wife, if you'll excuse me for saying so.

FALSTAFF

Well, then, you're a good [girl](#) [7](#).

[7](#) Falstaff uses the term "maid," meaning a young unmarried woman who is also a virgin.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I swear I am, I'm [just like my mother was](#) [8](#) when I was born.

[8](#) Mistress Quickly means to say that she is innocent like a virgin, but she ends up claiming the opposite.

FALSTAFF

I believe you. What do you want?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Can I have a word with you?

FALSTAFF

Two thousand words, my good lady, and I'll listen.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

There's a woman named Mistress Ford, sir--Please, come a little further this way--I live with master Doctor Caius--

FALSTAFF

Well, go on. Mistress Ford, you were saying--

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, that's correct. Please, come a little further this way.

FALSTAFF

I promise you, no one can hear us. These men are my own servants, my own servants.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Are they really? God bless them and may they serve God!

FALSTAFF

Well, Mistress Ford, what about her?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

55 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

60 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 rushing, 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
70 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

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

FALSTAFF

Ten and eleven?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

85 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

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, sir, she's a good person. Good lord! You are a reckless man! Well, God forgive you and everyone, I pray!

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, come on, what about Mistress Ford--

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, here's the long and the short of it. You have put her into such a terrible dilemma ⁹. The best courtier ¹⁰ there was, when the court was here in Windsor, couldn't have put her into such a dilemma. But there used to be knights, and lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches, I'm telling you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift. They all smelled so sweetly, full of perfume, and wrapped, I promise you, in silk and gold, and the letters were written so elegantly and they were so flattering, saying she was the best and the prettiest woman, that any woman would have been won over by letters like that. And I promise you, they could never even get her to look at them: someone offered me twenty gold coins this morning. But I'm not interested in any gold coins at all, except when I can get them honestly-- and, I'm telling you, they couldn't even get her to have a drink with the handsomest man in the bunch, and some of them were earls ¹¹, and even better, gentleman in the royal bodyguard. But, I'm telling you, none of that matters to her.

FALSTAFF

But what's her response to my offer? Give a short answer, my good female messenger. ¹²

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, she got your letter, and she thanks you a thousand times for it, and she wants me to tell you that her husband will be out of the house between ten and eleven o'clock.

FALSTAFF

Ten and eleven?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Yes, that's right, and then you can come over and do the thing that's on your mind. Master Ford, her husband, will be out of the house. It's too bad! The sweet woman has a very unhappy life with him. He's a very jealous man. She has a very unpleasant life with him, the good lady.

FALSTAFF

Ten and eleven. Woman, give her my regards. I won't fail to turn up.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, that's a nice thing to say. But I have another message for you. Mistress Page sends her best wishes to you too, and let me tell you, she's a virtuous and well-behaved, chaste wife, and, I tell you, she's not someone who will miss morning or evening prayer, not more than anyone else in Windsor, anyone at all. And she told me to tell you that her husband isn't out of the house very often, but she hopes there will be a time when he's away. I never knew a woman who was so fond of a man. I think you must be really charming, yes, really.

FALSTAFF

Not me, I promise you. If you ignore my sexual prowess, I don't have any other good qualities.

⁹ Mistress Quickly confuses "quandary" (dilemma) with "canary," a kind of Spanish wine.

¹⁰ A courtier was someone who served the king or queen at court; courtiers were usually wealthy, aristocratic, well-educated, and charismatic.

¹¹ An earl is a high-ranking nobleman.

¹² Mercury was the ancient Roman messenger god.

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

110 That were a jest indeed! they have not so little
grace, I hope: that were a trick indeed! but
Mistress Page would desire you to send her your
little page, of all loves: her husband has a
marvellous infection to the little page; and truly
115 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
120 be a kind woman in Windsor, she is one. You must
send her your page; no remedy.

FALSTAFF

Why, I will.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FALSTAFF

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

Exeunt MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN

FALSTAFF

This news distracts me!

PISTOL

135 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 overwhelm them all!

Exit

FALSTAFF

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

Enter BARDOLPH

BARDOLPH

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

FALSTAFF

Brook is his name?

BARDOLPH

Ay, sir.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Bless your heart for that!

FALSTAFF

But, please, tell me this: have Ford's wife and Page's wife told each other that they love me?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

That would really be a good joke! They don't have such bad manners, I hope. That would be quite a joke! But Mistress Page would like you to send her your young servant, for the sake of your love for her. Her husband has a great affection for the young servant, and Master Page is certainly a good man. No woman in Windsor leads a better life than she does. She can do what she likes, say what she likes, have what she likes, go to bed when she likes, get up when she likes, everything is the way she likes; and she deserves it, because there isn't a kinder woman in Windsor. You must send her your servant, there's no way out of it.

FALSTAFF

Well, I will.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

No, but really do it, and, you see, he can come and go between you both, and he can carry codewords back and forth, so that you can communicate with each other, and the boy won't know what's going on, because it isn't good for children to know about bad behavior. Older people, you know, have good judgment, people say, and know what the world is like.

FALSTAFF

Goodbye. Send my regards to both of them. Here's some money, I'm in your debt. Boy, go with this woman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN exit.

FALSTAFF

This news is bewildering!

PISTOL

This whore carries messages of love. [Set the sail](#)¹³, chase her, get ready for battle, arm yourselves: may we lose everything if I don't catch her!

PISTOL exits.

FALSTAFF

[To himself] What do you think about all this, old Jack? Go ahead with it. I'll make better use of my old body than I've done in the past. Will these women take care of you? After spending so much money, will you make a profit now? Handsome body, I thank you. People might say it's a dishonorable thing to do. I don't care, as long as it's successful.

BARDOLPH enters.

BARDOLPH

Sir John, there's a man named Master Brook downstairs who would like to meet you and talk to you, and he's sent you a drink of Spanish wine.

FALSTAFF

His name is Brook?

BARDOLPH

Yes, sir.

¹³ Pistol frequently speaks in metaphors drawn from war. Here, he describes his pursuit of Mistress Quickly as though it is a naval battle.

FALSTAFF

Call him in.

150

Exit BARDOLPH

FALSTAFF

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

Re-enter BARDOLPH, with FORD disguised

FORD

Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

155 And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

160

Exit BARDOLPH

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

175 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

180 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, 185 turn another into the register of your own; that I

FALSTAFF

Call him in.

BARDOLPH exits.

FALSTAFF

[To himself] Anyone who buys me liquor is welcome. Ah, ha! Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, have I won you over? Go, go!

BARDOLPH re-enters, with FORD (in disguise as Master Brook).

FORD

I wish you well, sir!

FALSTAFF

And you, sir! You want to talk to me?

FORD

I know I'm being forward, to force myself on you without giving you any prior notice.

FALSTAFF

You're welcome to talk to me. What do you want? Leave us alone, servant.

BARDOLPH exits.

FORD

Sir, I'm a man who has spent a lot of money. My name is Brook.

FALSTAFF

Good Master Brook, I'd like to get to know you better.

FORD

Good Sir John, I'd like to get to know you better—not to ask you for money, because you should know that I think I'm in a better position to lend money than you are. But this makes me feel comfortable approaching you without warning, for, as people say, if you offer people money, no one will turn you away.

FALSTAFF

Money is very good at persuading people.

FORD

True, and I have a bag of money here that's a lot of trouble to carry around. If you'll help me carry it, Sir John, I'll give you all of it, or half of it, as a reward for taking this heavy burden off my hands.

FALSTAFF

Sir, I don't know why you would give me money.

FORD

I'll tell you, sir, if you'll listen to me.

FALSTAFF

Tell me, Master Brook. I'll be glad to do something for you.

FORD

Sir, I hear you are an educated person—I'll come to the point quickly—I've known about you for a long time, although I've never had such a good chance as I wanted to meet you. I'm going to tell you something that will make me look like a very flawed person—but, good Sir John, even as you're hearing about my faults, as I'm telling you about them, please think about your own faults also, so you'll be

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

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

FALSTAFF

Well, sir.

FORD

I have long loved her, and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her; followed her with a doting observance; 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:
205 '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

Never.

FALSTAFF

210 Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

Of what quality was your love, then?

FORD

215 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

When I have told you that, I have told you all. Some say, that though she appear honest to me, yet in other places she enlargeth her mirth so far that there is shrewd construction made of her. Now, Sir John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable discourse, of great admittance, authentic in your place and person, generally allowed for your many war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.
225

FALSTAFF

O, sir!

FORD

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

more likely to excuse my faults, since you know yourself that it's easy to have them.

FALSTAFF

Okay, then, go on.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Go on, sir.

FORD

I have been in love with her for a long time, and, I'm telling you, I've given her a lot of money. I've been very attentive to her, I've tried to find a lot of opportunities to meet her, and taken advantage of every opportunity to get even a brief glimpse of her. Not only have I bought her many presents, I've given presents to a lot of other people so they would tell me what gifts she would like. In short, I've chased her just like love has chased me--constantly. But whatever I've deserved from her, thanks either to my feelings or my gifts, she hasn't given me anything in return--unless it's the gift of learning from experience, which I've purchased at a huge cost, and the lesson is this: "the beloved runs away when the lover chases her; love chases what runs away from it, and it runs away from what chases it."

FALSTAFF

She hasn't promised to satisfy you?

FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

Have you asked her to?

FORD

Never.

FALSTAFF

What kind of love do you have for her, then?

FORD

It's love for someone who already belongs to someone else. So I've wasted all my time trying to get something that wasn't available.

FALSTAFF

Why are you telling me all this?

FORD

When I answer that question, then I've told you everything. Some people say that even though she seems chaste to me, she's so flirtatious with other men that some people have strong suspicions about her fidelity. Now, Sir John, here's the thing I really want: you're a gentleman with very good manners, you speak well, you mix with people in the highest social circles, you have authority because of your status and your appearance, and everyone agrees that you have a lot of accomplishments, in war, at court, and in your studies.

FALSTAFF

O, sir!

FORD

Believe me, because you know it's true. [*He hands FALSTAFF money*] Here's some money; spend it, spend it, spend more than that, spend all the money I have in

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

235 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

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

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

250 O good sir!

FALSTAFF

I say you shall.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook; you shall want none. I shall be with her, I may tell you, by her
255 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
260 know how I speed.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not: yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the
265 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

270 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
275 cuckold's horns. Master Brook, thou shalt know I will predominate over the peasant, and thou shalt lie with his wife. Come to me soon at night. Ford's a knave, and I will aggravate his style; thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and

exchange, I want you to try and overcome Mistress Ford's chastity. Use your skills in seducing women. Get her to agree to have an affair with you. If any one can do it, you can.

FALSTAFF

Given that you love her so much, would it do you any good if I won the woman that you want for yourself? I think you're making an absurd request.

FORD

Oh, pay attention to my plan. She's so confident that she's perfectly chaste that I don't dare to approach her. She's too pure for me to get near her. Now, if I could go to her and
accuse ¹⁴ her of having had an affair, then I would have a better argument for why she should give in to my desires, too--then I could convince her to stop caring about her purity, her reputation, her marriage vow, and all the other things that prevent her from giving in to me and that block me so effectively right now. What do you say to that plan, Sir John?

FALSTAFF

Master Brook, first, I will freely take your money; then, give me your hand; *[They shake hands]* and finally, I promise, as a gentleman, that you will get to sleep with Ford's wife if you so desire.

FORD

Oh, good sir!

FALSTAFF

I'm telling you, you will.

FORD

You won't be short of money, Sir John, you'll have all the money you want.

FALSTAFF

You won't be short of Mistress Ford, you'll have her. I'm going to meet her, in fact, because she has actually asked me to come and see her--just before you came in to see me, her messenger left my room. I will see her between ten and eleven, because at that time, her jealous scoundrel of a husband won't be at home. Come see me tonight and I'll tell you how things went.

FORD

I'm very lucky to have met you. Do you know Ford, sir?

FALSTAFF

I don't give a damn about him, that poor lowlife cuckold! I don't know him, but I shouldn't call him poor. People say that that jealous willing cuckold ¹⁵ has tons of money, which is why I find his wife attractive. I'll use her to get access to that foolish scoundrel's money, and that will be a huge profit to me.

FORD

I wish you knew Ford, sir, so that if you saw him, you could avoid him.

FALSTAFF

I don't give a damn about him, that cheap, lower-class scoundrel! I'll stare him down until he's scared out of his wits. I'll frighten him with my club--it will be a bad omen for that cuckold. Master Brook, I will defeat this lower-class man, and you will sleep with his wife. Come see me tonight. Ford's a lowlife, and I'll make it so that you can call him worse names than that. You, Master Brook, will learn that he's a lowlife and a cuckold. Come see me tonight.

¹⁴ The idea is that if Mistress Ford has already slept with one man, and if Master Brook tells her that he knows what she's done, then she won't have a good argument for why she shouldn't sleep with him too.

¹⁵ "Wittolly" means that Ford willingly makes himself a cuckold. Falstaff may mean that it will be Ford's own fault if other men steal his wife, because he was too stupid to notice or prevent it.

cuckold. Come to me soon at night.

Exit

FORD

280 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
285 have thought this? See the hell of having a false
woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers
ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not
only receive this villanous wrong, but stand under
the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that
290 does me this wrong. Terms! names! Amaimon sounds
well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are
devils' additions, the names of fiends: but
Cuckold! Wittol!--Cuckold! the devil himself hath
not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he
295 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
aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling
gelding, than my wife with herself; then she plots,
then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they
300 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;
305 better three hours too soon than a minute too late.
Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!

Exit

FALSTAFF exits.

FORD

What a damned, pleasure-seeking scoundrel this man is!
I'm ready to burst with anger. Who says that I have no
reason to be jealous? My wife asked him to come see her:
they picked a time; they made an appointment. Would any
man have thought this would happen? It's so terrible to
have an unfaithful wife! She will sleep with another man,
she will steal my money, she will ruin my reputation, and
not only will she do all these terrible things to me, but I'm
also being called terrible names by the man who's ruining
me. Names! Names! Amaimon¹⁶ is a good name; Lucifer is
another good name; Barbason is another good name; and
they are all devils' names, the names of demons. But
cuckold! willing cuckold!--Cuckold! Even the devil doesn't
have such a bad name as that. Page is a fool, an
overconfident fool. He trusts his wife, he won't be jealous.
I'd rather trust a Flemish¹⁷ person not to eat my butter, or
Parson Hugh the Welshman not to eat my cheese, or an
Irishman not to drink my liquor, or a thief not to steal my
horse, than to trust my wife to behave herself when she's
unsupervised. When she's alone, she plots, she thinks, then
she comes up with a plan, and women will carry out the
plans they come up with. Even if it means doing themselves
a lot of harm, they'll still carry out their plans. Thank God
I'm a jealous man! They're meeting at eleven o'clock. I'll
stop this, I'll expose my wife, get revenge on Falstaff, and
laugh at Page. I'll get to work. It would be better to be three
hours too early than a minute too late. Ugh, ugh, ugh!
Cuckold! Cuckold! Cuckold!

FORD exits.

¹⁶ Amaimon, Lucifer, and Barbason are names of devils.

¹⁷ Flemish people were thought to be fond of butter, as Welshmen were of cheese, and Irishmen of alcohol.

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY

DOCTOR CAIUS

Jack Rugby!

RUGBY

Sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vat is de clock, Jack?

RUGBY

'Tis past the hour, sir, that Sir Hugh promised to
5 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

10 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.

Shakescleare Translation

DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY enter.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Jack Rugby!

RUGBY

What is it, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

What time is it, Jack?

RUGBY

It's past the time that Sir Hugh promised he would meet
you, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, he'll save his soul by not coming. His prayers will be
answered if he doesn't come. By God, Jack Rugby, he would
end up dead if he came.

RUGBY

He's smart, sir. He knows that you'd kill him if he came.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, he'd be more dead than a dead fish when I got
through with him. Take your sword, Jack, I'll tell you how I'll
kill him.

RUGBY

Alas, sir, I cannot fence.

DOCTOR CAIUS

15 Villany, take your rapier.

RUGBY

Forbear; here's company.

Enter Host, SHALLOW, SLENDER, and PAGE

HOST

Bless thee, bully doctor!

SHALLOW

Save you, Master Doctor Caius!

PAGE

20 Now, good master doctor!

SLENDER

Give you good morrow, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

HOST

25 To see thee fight, to see thee foin, to see thee traverse; to see thee here, to see thee there; to see thee pass thy punto, thy stock, thy reverse, thy distance, thy montant. Is he dead, my Ethiopian? is he dead, my Francisco? ha, bully! What says my AEsculapius? my Galen? my heart of elder? ha! is he dead, bully stale? is he dead?

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

HOST

Thou art a Castalion-King-Urinal. Hector of Greece, my boy!

DOCTOR CAIUS

35 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

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

RUGBY

Unfortunately, sir, I can't sword-fight.

DOCTOR CAIUS

You lowlife, pick up your sword.

RUGBY

Cut it out, people are coming.

The HOST, SHALLOW, SLENDER, and PAGE enter.

HOST

God bless you, my jolly doctor!

SHALLOW

God bless you, Master Doctor Caius!

PAGE

Now then, good Master Doctor!

SLENDER

I wish you a good day, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS

What have you four come for?

HOST

We came to see you fight, to see you thrust your sword ¹, to see you move forward and backward, to see you here, to see you over there, to see you thrust with your sword point, to see your thrust, your backhand hit, your skill at keeping the right distance from your opponent, your upward thrust with your sword. Is he dead, my Ethiopian? Is he dead, my Frenchman? Ha, my jolly fellow! What does the doctor ² say? The doctor with his weak heart ³? Ha! Is he dead, you fool? Is he dead?

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, he's the most cowardly scoundrel of a priest in the world. He hasn't shown up.

HOST

You're a Spanish bottle of urine ⁴. You're a great warrior ⁵, my man!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Please, bear witness to the fact that I have waited six or seven, two, three hours for him, and he hasn't come.

SHALLOW

He's wiser than you, master doctor. He cures souls, and you cure bodies. If you fought each other, you'd be acting contrary to your professions. Isn't that right, Master Page?

PAGE

Master Shallow, you used to be a great fighter, even though you're a peaceful man ⁶ now.

¹ "Foin," and the terms following in the original text, are technical fencing terms.

² Aesculapius was the classical god of medicine; Galen was a famous ancient physician.

³ An elder is a tree with soft wood; the Host insults Caius by saying he has a soft heart.

⁴ "Castilion" could mean "from Castile," a region in Spain. It could also be read as "cast-stale-ian," which means someone who diagnoses (casts) illnesses by looking at urine (stale).

⁵ Hector was one of the great Trojan warriors in the Trojan War. The Host mistakes Greece for Troy.

⁶ "Man of peace" also refers to Shallow's role as justice of the peace.

SHALLOW

45 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

50 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. A word, Mounseur Mockwater.

DOCTOR CAIUS

55 Mock-water! vat is dat?

HOST

Mock-water, in our English tongue, is valour, bully.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, den, I have as mush mock-water as de Englishman. Scurvy jack-dog priest! by gar, me will cut his ears.

HOST

60 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

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

Me tank you for dat.

HOST

70 And, moreover, bully,—but first, master guest, and Master Page, and eke Cavaleiro Slender, go you through the town to Frogmore.

Aside to them

PAGE

Sir Hugh is there, is he?

SHALLOW

By God, Master Page, even though I'm old and peaceful now, if I see someone take out a sword, I have a strong urge to join in the fight. Even though we are judges and doctors and priests, Master Page, we still have some energy left over from our youth. We're men ⁷, after all, Master Page.

PAGE

That's true, Master Shallow.

SHALLOW

You'll see it is true, Master Page. Master Doctor Caius, I've come to take you home. I've promised to keep the peace. You have shown that you are a wise doctor, and Sir Hugh has shown that he is a wise and calm priest. You must come with me, Master Doctor.

HOST

Excuse me, Justice. I'd like to speak to you, Monsieur Mockwater ⁸.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Mockwater! What does that mean?

HOST

Mockwater, in the English language, means bravery, my jolly fellow.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, then, I have as much mockwater as any Englishman does! That despicable low-bred priest! By God, I'll cut his ears.

HOST

He'll completely clapperclaw ⁹ you, my jolly fellow.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Clapperclaw! What does that mean?

HOST

It means, he'll make up for everything he's done to you.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, I'll make sure he clapperclaws me, because I'll make him, by God.

HOST

And I'll get him to do it, or else I'll let him run away. ¹⁰

DOCTOR CAIUS

I thank you for that.

HOST

And what's more, my jolly fellow—but first, Master Guest, and Master Page, and also Soldier Slender, go through the town to the village of Frogmore ¹¹.

The HOST speaks aside to them so CAIUS cannot hear.

PAGE

Is Sir Hugh there?

⁷ Shallow says "sons of women" when he probably means "sons of men," who have traditional masculine desires for fighting.

⁸ He calls the doctor "Monsieur" because he is French. "Mockwater" could refer to the doctor's diagnosing illness by examining urine (water). The Host implies that Caius is a "mock" or fake doctor; or he could imply that Caius is sterile and lacks masculine bravery.

⁹ To "clapperclaw" means to maul or thrash.

¹⁰ Doctor Caius likely does not understand what "wag" means.

¹¹ Frogmore is a village near Windsor.

HOST

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

SHALLOW

We will do it.

SLENDER

75 Adieu, good master doctor.

Exeunt PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, me vill kill de priest; for he speak for a jack-an-ape to Anne Page.

HOST

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

HOST

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, 'tis good; vell said.

HOST

90 Let us wag, then.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Come at my heels, Jack Rugby.

Exeunt

HOST

He is. Go see what kind of mood he's in, and I'll bring the Doctor there by taking the path around the fields. Will that work?

SHALLOW

We'll do it.

SLENDER

Goodbye, good Master Doctor.

PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER exit.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, I'm going to kill that priest for trying to intervene with Anne Page on behalf on a complete idiot.

HOST

Let him die. Don't be so agitated, try to cool down your anger. Come walk around the fields with me through Frogmore. I'll take you to where Anne Page is attending a party at a farmhouse, and you can woo her. Am I on the right track? Is this a good idea?

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, thank you for this, by God, I love you. I'll get high-ranking people to come stay at your inn: an earl, a knight, lords, gentlemen, and my patients.

HOST

And for that, I'll oppose ¹² your attempts to win Anne Page. Does that sound good?

¹² Caius mistakes "adversary" (enemy) for "advocate" (helper).

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, that's great, I like what you're saying.

HOST

Let's go, then.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Follow me, Jack Rugby.

The HOST, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY exit.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SIMPLE

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

SIMPLE

10 I will, sir.

Shakescleare Translation

SIR HUGH EVANS and SIMPLE enter.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Good Master Slender's servant, whose name is Simple, can you please tell me where have you been looking for Master Caius, who calls himself a medical doctor?

SIMPLE

Well sir, I've looked near the small park, near the big park, everywhere, near the village of old Windsor ¹³, and everywhere except back near the town.

¹³ Old Windsor is a village outside Windsor, where this play takes place.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I'd really like you to look near the town, too.

SIMPLE

I will, sir.

Exit

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Sings

SIR HUGH EVANS

*To shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sings madrigals;
There will we make our peds of roses,
20 And a thousand fragrant posies.
To shallow--
Mercy on me! I have a great dispositions to cry.*

Sings

SIR HUGH EVANS

*Melodious birds sing madrigals--
When as I sat in Pabylon--
25 And a thousand vagram posies.
To shallow & c.*

Re-enter SIMPLE

SIMPLE

Yonder he is coming, this way, Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

He's welcome.

Sings

SIR HUGH EVANS

30 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
35 the stile, this way.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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.
40 Keep a gamester from the dice, and a good student
from his book, and it is wonderful.

SLENDER

[*Aside*] Ah, sweet Anne Page!

PAGE

'Save you, good Sir Hugh!

SIR HUGH EVANS

'Pless you from his mercy sake, all of you!

SHALLOW

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

SIMPLE exits.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Bless my soul, I'm so upset and agitated! I'll be glad if he
has lied to me. I feel so dejected! I'll smack him on his
dishonest head with his urine-collecting bottles ² when I
get a chance. Bless my soul!

² As a doctor, Caius would collect samples of people's urine in bottles to diagnose their illnesses.

SIR HUGH EVANS sings.

SIR HUGH EVANS

*Let us go to shallow rivers ³
Where sweetly singing birds sing songs to the waterfalls;
There we'll make beds out of roses
And a thousand sweet-smelling flowers.
Let us go--
God have mercy on me! I feel like I'm going to cry.*

³ These verses paraphrase a poem by Christopher Marlowe, a playwright contemporary with Shakespeare.

SIR HUGH EVANS sings again.

SIR HUGH EVANS

*Sweetly-singing birds sing songs--
As when I sat in Babylon--
And a thousand scattered flowers.
Let us go... (etc.) ⁴*

⁴ Sir Hugh may continue singing until Simple re-enters.

SIMPLE re-enters.

SIMPLE

Look, he's coming this way, Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

He's welcome.

SIR HUGH EVANS sings.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Let us go to shallow rivers, to the waterfalls--
I hope that God helps the people who are in the right! What
weapons is he bringing?

SIMPLE

He's not bringing any weapons, sir. Here comes my master,
Master Shallow, and another gentleman, from Frogmore,
over the fence, this way.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Please, give me my coat; or else hold on to it.

PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER enter.

SHALLOW

How are you doing, Master Parson! Good morning, good Sir
Hugh. If you keep a gambler away from gambling, and a
good student away from studying, you can get some
surprising results.

SLENDER

[*To himself*] Oh, sweet Anne Page!

PAGE

God bless you, good Sir Hugh!

SIR HUGH EVANS

God bless you in his mercy, all of you!

SHALLOW

What, fighting and religion! Do you practice both of them,
Master Parson?

PAGE

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

There is reasons and causes for it.

PAGE

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

Fery well: what is it?

PAGE

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

SHALLOW

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

What is he?

PAGE

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

PAGE

Why?

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

PAGE

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

SHALLOW

[Aside] O sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW

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

Enter Host, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY

PAGE

Nay, good master parson, keep in your weapon.

SHALLOW

So do you, good master doctor.

HOST

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

And you're acting as if you were still a young man! You're wearing only your tights ⁵ and a light jacket on a chilly day when people catch cold!

⁵ Men in Shakespeare's day wore hose, garments similar to modern tights.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I have a good reason for that.

PAGE

We've come to do something helpful for you, Master Parson.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Very well, what is it?

PAGE

Over there is a very honorable gentleman who was probably treated badly by someone, and so he's not behaving in his usual dignified and calm way.

SHALLOW

I'm more than eighty years old, and I never heard of someone with his job, dignity, and education, caring so little about his own reputation.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Who is he?

PAGE

I think you know him: Master Doctor Caius, the famous French doctor.

SIR HUGH EVANS

My God! I would rather you had told me where I could find some thick soup.

PAGE

Why?

SIR HUGH EVANS

He doesn't know anything about medicine ⁶, and he is also a scoundrel, the most cowardly scoundrel you could ever meet.

⁶ Hippocrates and Galen, to whom Sir Hugh refers in the original text, were two famous ancient physicians.

PAGE

[To SHALLOW] I'm telling you, he would fight him.

SLENDER

[To himself] Oh sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW

[To PAGE] It seems like it, judging by his weapons. Keep them apart, here comes Doctor Caius.

The HOST, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY enter.

PAGE

No, good Master Parson, don't draw your sword.

SHALLOW

And don't draw your sword either, good Master Doctor.

HOST

Take away their weapons and let them talk to each other. Keep them from fighting with swords and let them just fight with words.

DOCTOR CAIUS

[To SIR HUGH so that only he can hear] Please, let me have a private word with you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

80 *[Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS]* Pray you, use your patience: in good time.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

85 *[Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS]* Pray you let us not be laughing-stocks to other men's humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will one way or other make you amends.
[Aloud so that the others can hear] I will knog your urinals about your knave's cockscomb for missing your meetings and appointments.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

HOST

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

HOST

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

SHALLOW

110 Trust me, a mad host. Follow, gentlemen, follow.

SLENDER

[Aside] O sweet Anne Page!

Exeunt SHALLOW, SLENDER, PAGE, and Host

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

[Aloud so that the others can hear] Why didn't you meet me?

SIR HUGH EVANS

[To DOCTOR CAIUS so that only he can hear] Please, be calm.

[Aloud so that the others can hear] I was going to come.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, you are a coward, a dog, an ape!

SIR HUGH EVANS

[To DOCTOR CAIUS so that only he can hear] Please, let's not make fools out of ourselves so the others can laugh at us. I want to be friends with you, and I'll make things up to you one way or another.

[Aloud so that the others can hear] I will hit you in the head with your urine-collecting bottles for missing our meeting.

DOCTOR CAIUS


You devil! Jack Rugby--my host of the Garter Inn--didn't I wait for him to kill him? Wasn't I waiting at the place I said I would?

SIR HUGH EVANS

As sure as I'm a Christian, I'm telling you, this was the place we were supposed to meet. Ask the Host of the Garter Inn.

HOST

Be quiet, I'm telling you, [Wales and France](#), Frenchman and Welshman, man who cures souls and man who cures bodies!


 Gallia and Gaul were ancient names for Wales and France.


DOCTOR CAIUS

Yes, that's good, excellent.

HOST

Be quiet, I said! Listen to me, the Host of the Garter Inn. Am I devious? Am I crafty? Am I a treacherous schemer? Do I want to lose my doctor? No, he gives me medicines and helps my digestion. Do I want to lose my parson, my priest, my Sir Hugh? No, he gives me verses from the Bible and directions about what I shouldn't do. Give me your hand, man who cures bodies; like this. Give me your hand, man who cures souls; like this. You educated men, I've tricked both of you. I sent you to the wrong places. Your hearts are brave, your bodies aren't hurt, and let's let this fight end in a drink! Come on, put their swords aside. Follow me, you peaceful men: follow, follow, follow.

 The Italian political philosopher Machiavelli was frequently represented on the English stage as an example of someone treacherous.

 "No-words" may also refer to Sir Hugh's habit of making up words or mixing up words.

SHALLOW

Believe me, he's a jubilant man! Follow, gentlemen, follow.

SLENDER

[To himself] O sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW, SLENDER, PAGE and the HOST exit.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ha, do I understand what's going on? Have you made fools out of us, ha, ha?

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is just great. He's made everyone laugh at us. I want to be friends with you, and let's put our heads together to figure out how to take revenge on this scabby, dishonest, cheating scoundrel, the host of the Garter Inn.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Exeunt

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, with all my heart. He promised to take me to Anne Page. By God, he tricked me there, too.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Well, I'll smack his head. Please, follow me.

DOCTOR CAIUS and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

MISTRESS PAGE

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

ROBIN

5 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.

Enter FORD

FORD

10 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

15 Be sure of that,--two other husbands.

FORD

Where had you this pretty weather-cock?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

ROBIN

20 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 good man and he! Is your wife at home indeed?

FORD

25 Indeed she is.

Shakescleare Translation

MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN enter.


MISTRESS PAGE


No, go your own way, my fine young man, You're used to being a servant, but now you're in charge. Would you prefer to direct me, or to follow your master?

ROBIN

I would rather direct you like a grown man than follow Falstaff like a young boy.

MISTRESS PAGE

Oh, you use nice language. I see you'll be a [courtier](#). 

 *Courtiers--attendants of a king or queen at court--were noted for using flattering language.*

FORD enters.

FORD

It's nice to see you, Mistress Page. Where are you going?

MISTRESS PAGE

Actually, to see your wife. Is she at home?

FORD

Yes, and she's as bored and lonely as can be, because she doesn't have any company. If your husbands were dead, I think the two of you would get married.

MISTRESS PAGE

Yes, we would--we'd marry two other men.

FORD

Where did you find this handsome young servant?

MISTRESS PAGE

I don't remember who my husband hired him from. What did you say your boss's name was, young man?

ROBIN

Sir John Falstaff.

FORD

Sir John Falstaff!

MISTRESS PAGE

Ha, ha, I can never remember his name. He's such good friends with my husband! Is your wife really at home?

FORD

Yes, she is.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

FORD

Has Page any brains? hath he any eyes? hath he any thinking? Sure, they sleep; he hath no use of them.
 30 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.
 35 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
 40 Mistress Page, divulge Page himself for a secure and wilful Actaeon; and to these violent proceedings all my neighbours shall cry aim.

Clock heard

FORD

The clock gives me my cue, and my assurance bids me search: there I shall find Falstaff: I shall be
 45 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

& C

Well met, Master Ford.

FORD

Trust me, a good knot: I have good cheer at home; and I pray you all go with me.
 50

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.
 55

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.
 60

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

HOST

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

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll go see her with your permission. I'm dying to see her.

MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN exit.

FORD

Does Page have a brain? Can he see anything? Is he thinking? I'm sure he's not using his brain or his eyes. Why, this boy will carry letters between them as easily as a cannon can shoot straight for two-hundred-forty yards. Page increases his wife's sexual desire. He encourages her desire and gives her the opportunity to act on it, and now she's going to visit my wife, and Falstaff's servant is going with her. Anyone could see that trouble is coming. And Falstaff's servant is going with her! They're hatching plans, and our disloyal wives are planning to do this terrible thing together. Well; I'll take Falstaff by surprise, then confront my wife, then reveal how unfaithful this apparently well-behaved Mistress Page is, reveal that Page is overconfident and willing to be a cuckold, and my neighbors will applaud me for doing all these harsh things.

A clock strikes.

FORD

The clock tells me that it's time to go, and I'm certain that I should go search the house. I'll find Falstaff there. I will be praised for acting this way, not made fun of, because it's absolutely certain that Falstaff is at my house. I will go.

PAGE, SHALLOW, SLENDER, the HOST, SIR HUGH EVANS, DOCTOR CAIUS, and RUGBY enter.

THE COMPANY

It's nice to see you, Master Ford.

FORD

What a fine group of people! I have good food and drink at home. Please come with me.

SHALLOW

I'm afraid I can't come, Master Ford.

SLENDER

And neither can I, sir. We have an appointment to eat with Mistress Anne, and I wouldn't miss the appointment for any amount of money.

SHALLOW

We have delayed in arranging a marriage between Anne Page and my cousin Slender, and we'll settle it today.

SLENDER

I hope you support me marrying her, father Page.

PAGE

I do, Master Slender. I'm completely on your side, but my wife is on your side, Master Doctor.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Yes, by God, and the young lady loves me. My housekeeper Quickly told me so.

HOST

What do you think about young Master Fenton? He leaps and dances, he has young eyes, he writes poetry, he speaks cheerfully, he smells like spring. He will succeed, he will succeed. Thanks to his youthful potential, he will succeed.

PAGE

70 Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no having: he kept company with the wild prince and Poin; 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

75 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

80 Well, fare you well: we shall have the freer wooing at Master Page's.

Exeunt SHALLOW, and SLENDER

DOCTOR CAIUS

Go home, John Rugby; I come anon.

Exit RUGBY

HOST

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

Exit

FORD

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

ALL

90 Have with you to see this monster.

Exeunt

PAGE

I won't agree to it, I promise you. The gentleman has no property. He hangs out with the wild prince and Poin; his social status is too high; he's too sophisticated. No, he won't increase his property with any of my property. If he wants to marry Anne, she won't have a dowry. I won't give her any money without my consent, and I don't consent to her marrying Fenton.

FORD

I urge you, some of you come home with me to have dinner. Besides good food, you'll have good entertainment--I'll show you a spectacle. Master Doctor, you'll come. So will you, Master Page, and you, Sir Hugh.

SHALLOW

Well, good-bye.

[To SLENDER so that only he can hear] It will be easier to woo Anne at Master Page's house.

SHALLOW and SLENDER exit.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Go home, John Rugby. I'll come soon.

RUGBY exits.

HOST

Good-bye, my friends. I'm going to go see that good knight Falstaff, and drink wine with him.

The HOST exits.


FORD

[To himself] I think I'll make things rough for Falstaff first. I'll get him. Will you come with me, good men?

ALL

We're coming to see this spectacle.

FORD, DOCTOR CAIUS, SIR HUGH EVANS, and PAGE exit.

 Page refers to the badly-behaved prince, Hal, from Henry IV Part 1. Hal and Poin were Falstaff's companions, not Fenton's.

Act 3, Scene 3

Shakespeare

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 Servants with a basket

MISTRESS PAGE

Come, come, come.

MISTRESS FORD

5 Here, set it down.

Shakescleare Translation

MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE enter.

MISTRESS FORD

Hey there, John! Hey there, Robert!

MISTRESS PAGE

Quickly, quickly! Is the laundry-basket--

MISTRESS FORD

I'm sure it is. Hey there, Robert, I'm calling you!

Servants enter with a basket.

MISTRESS PAGE

Come, come, come.

MISTRESS FORD

Here, put 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 brew-house: and when I suddenly call you, come forth, and without any pause
10 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

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

Exeunt Servants

MISTRESS PAGE

Here comes little Robin.

Enter ROBIN

MISTRESS FORD

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

ROBIN

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

ROBIN

25 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

30 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.

Exit ROBIN

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exit

MISTRESS PAGE

Tell the servants what they're supposed to do. We have to act quickly.

MISTRESS FORD

[To the servants] Well, like I told you before, John and Robert, be ready right over here in the brew-house ¹, and when I call you, come out right away, and without pausing or tripping, lift this basket up on your shoulders. When you've done that, go as quickly as you can, and carry it to the launderers ² in Datchet-mead, ³ and when you get there, empty it into the muddy ditch near the bank of the Thames River.

¹ Beer was made in a brew-house.

² Whitsters did laundry; specifically, they bleached linen.

³ Datchet-Mead was a meadow between Windsor Little Park and the Thames River, where launderers would bleach clothes.

MISTRESS PAGE

You'll do that?

MISTRESS FORD

I've told them over and over, they know what to do. Get going, and come when you're called.

Servants exit.

MISTRESS PAGE

Here comes young Robin.

ROBIN enters.

MISTRESS FORD

Hello to our lookout ⁴! What's the news?

⁴ An eyas-musket is a young hawk; Robin has been keeping watch at the door with a hawk-like eye.

ROBIN

My master, Sir John, is at your back door, Mistress Ford, and he wants to see you.

MISTRESS PAGE

You little puppet, have you been loyal to us?

ROBIN

Yes, I promise. My master doesn't know that you're here and he threatened to put me out of work forever if I tell you that he's visiting here, because he swears he'll fire me.

MISTRESS PAGE

You're a good boy. If you keep our secrets, you'll get a new set of clothes ⁵. I'll go hide.

⁵ In the original text, Mistress Page refers to a doublet (a short jacket) and hose (breeches).

MISTRESS FORD

Do that.

[To ROBIN] Go tell your master that I'm alone.

ROBIN exits.

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page, remember when you're supposed to come in. ⁶

⁶ A cue lets an actor know when to enter onstage; Mistress Page continues the theatrical metaphor with "act" and "hiss." (Audiences hissed at poor actors.)

MISTRESS PAGE

I promise you. If I don't do it properly, scold me.

MISTRESS PAGE exits.

MISTRESS FORD

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

40

Enter FALSTAFF

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

O sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF

45 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

50 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.

55

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

60

MISTRESS FORD

Believe me, there is no such thing in me.

FALSTAFF

65 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 deservest it.

70

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

75 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

Get going. We'll trick this disgusting bag of fluid, this swollen watery pumpkin. We'll teach him that we are faithful wives, not flirts.

FALSTAFF enters.

FALSTAFF

Do I finally have you, my divine beauty? Well, let me die now, because I have lived long enough. I couldn't want anything more than this. O what a blessed moment!

MISTRESS FORD

Oh, sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, I can't lie, I can't talk idly, Mistress Ford. Now I wish something terrible--I wish your husband were dead. I'll say it in front of anyone: I would make you my lady.

MISTRESS FORD

Your lady, Sir John! Oh dear, I would be a pathetic lady.

FALSTAFF

I bet there wouldn't be another lady in the whole court of France like you. I see how your eyes would look like diamonds. You have beautifully arched eyebrows that would look lovely with any kind of Venetian head dress.

MISTRESS FORD

A plain handkerchief, Sir John, that's the only thing that would look good with my eyebrows, and it wouldn't even look that good.

FALSTAFF

By God, you're very unfair to yourself to say that. You would make a perfect courtier, and the steady way you place your feet means you would walk very well in a hoop-skirt. I see what you would look like if you hadn't had bad luck, given your natural beauty. Come on, you can't deny it.

MISTRESS FORD

Believe me, I don't have any qualities like that.

FALSTAFF

What made me love you? My love should convince you that you have some extraordinary qualities. Come on, I can't lie and say you are this and that, like so many of these tongue-tied perfumed young men that look like women in men's clothing, and smell like the flower shops of London in the summer. I can't, but I love you. No one but you, and you deserve it.

MISTRESS FORD

Don't lie to me, sir. I'm afraid that you love Mistress Page.

FALSTAFF

You might as well say that I love walking by the gate of the debtors' prison, which smells as terrible as the smoke from a lime-furnace.

⁷ Turtledoves were known for their fidelity; jays were known as chattering birds, representing flirtatiousness.

⁸ "Lady" was a formal title for the wife of a knight.

⁹ Nobility wore fancy head dresses known as "tires;" a ship-tire was a head dress in the shape of a ship. Luxuries like these often came from the Italian city of Venice.

¹⁰ Falstaff means that Mistress Ford had bad luck in being born to a low social station, not having the opportunity to wear fine clothes like the ones he describes.

¹¹ Bucklersbury was a street in London where fresh, fragrant medicinal plants, called "simples," were sold in the summer.

¹² Counter-gate was a prison where debtors were jailed if they failed to pay back the money they owed.

¹³ A lime-kiln was a furnace used to heat lime to make limestone.

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

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

ROBIN

[Within] 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

85 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 hides himself

Re-enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

MISTRESS FORD

90 What's the matter? how now!

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

95 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 pon you! how am I mistook in you!

MISTRESS FORD

Why, alas, what's the matter?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

'Tis not so, I hope.

MISTRESS PAGE

105 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
110 amazed; call all your senses to you; defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

MISTRESS FORD

Well, God knows how much I love you, and one day you'll find out.

FALSTAFF

Remember that. I'll deserve it.

MISTRESS FORD

No, I tell you, you do deserve it, or else I couldn't feel the way I do.

ROBIN

[Offstage] Mistress Ford, Mistress Ford! Mistress Page is at the door, sweating and puffing and looking alarmed, and she wants to speak with you right away.

FALSTAFF

She won't see me. I'll hide behind the curtain.

MISTRESS FORD

Please, do that. She's very likely to gossip.

FALSTAFF hides himself.

MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN re-enter.

MISTRESS FORD

What's the matter? What's going on?

MISTRESS PAGE

Oh, Mistress Ford, what have you done? You're disgraced, you're defeated, you're ruined forever!

MISTRESS FORD

What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

It's awful, Mistress Ford! That you have an honest man for a husband and give him reason to distrust you!

MISTRESS FORD

What reason to distrust me?

MISTRESS PAGE

What reason to distrust you? Shame on you! I was so wrong about you!

MISTRESS FORD

Why, oh dear, what's the matter?

MISTRESS PAGE

Your husband's coming here, woman, with all the officers in Windsor, to look for a man that he says you let into the house so you could take advantage of your husband's absence. You're ruined.

MISTRESS FORD

I hope that isn't true.

MISTRESS PAGE

I hope it isn't true that you do actually have a man here! But it's definitely true that your husband is coming to look for a man here, and he has half the town following him. I came ahead to warn you. If you know that you're innocent, well, that's good, but if you have a lover here, get him out, get him out. Don't be bewildered. Pull yourself together, defend your reputation, or you'll never be respectable again.

MISTRESS FORD

115 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

120 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

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FALSTAFF

I love thee. Help me away. Let me creep in here. I'll never--

Gets into the basket; they cover him with foul linen

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

What, John! Robert! John!

Exit ROBIN

Re-enter Servants

MISTRESS FORD

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

SERVANT

To the laundress, forsooth.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

What will I do? There is a man here, my lover, and I'm not so much afraid of being disgraced myself as I'm afraid that he'll be in danger. I would give a thousand pounds to get him out of the house.

MISTRESS PAGE

Shame on you! Don't waste time thinking about what "you would give." Your husband's close by, think of some way to get your lover out of the house. You can't hide him in the house. Oh, how you have lied to me! Look, here's a basket. If he's not too big, your lover can hide in there, and you can throw dirty clothes on him, as if the basket were going out to the laundry. Or--since it's bleaching time--have two of your servants take the basket to Datchet-mead.

MISTRESS FORD

He's too big to fit in there. What will I do?

FALSTAFF

[Coming out from behind the curtain] Let me see it, let me see it, O, let me see it! I'll get in, I'll get in. Take your friend's advice. I'll get in.

MISTRESS PAGE

What, Sir John Falstaff? Did you send me those love letters, knight?

FALSTAFF

[To MISTRESS PAGE so that only she can hear] I love you. Help me get away. Let me get in the basket. I'll never--

FALSTAFF gets into the basket; they cover him with dirty clothes.

MISTRESS PAGE

[To ROBIN] Help to cover up your master, boy.

[To MISTRESS FORD] Call your servants, Mistress Ford. You lying knight!

MISTRESS FORD

Hey, John! Robert! John!

ROBIN exits.

The servants enter.

MISTRESS FORD

Take these clothes out of here quickly. Where's the basket pole? Look how you're dawdling! Carry these clothes to the launderers in Datchet-mead, quickly, go.

FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS enter.

FORD

Please, come with me. If it turns out that I have no reason to suspect my wife of infidelity, then you can make fun of me, then you can make a joke out of me--I'll deserve it. What's going on? Where are you taking this basket?

SERVANT

To the launderers.

MISTRESS FORD

Why, what do you care where they're taking it? Yes, I bet you're really concerned about the [buck-washing!](#)¹⁴

¹⁴ Buck-washing is laundry that needs to be bleached.

FORD

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

Exeunt Servants with the basket

FORD

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

Locking the door

FORD

So, now uncape.

155

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.

160

Exit

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

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

165

Exeunt PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

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

170 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

175 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

180 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.

FORD

Buck ¹⁵! I wish I could wash away the suspicion that I am a
buck! Buck, buck, buck! Yes, buck, I bet, buck, and I bet
there are bucks present right now, as you'll see.

¹⁵ Ford takes up "buck" from "buck-washing" and uses it to mean "cuckold." A buck (a male deer) symbolizes the cuckold due to its antlers.

The servants exit with the basket.

FORD

Gentleman, I had a dream last night. I'll tell you my dream.
Here, here, here are my keys. Go up the stairs to my rooms,
search, look. I bet we'll find something hiding there. Let me
lock this door first.

FORD locks the door.

FORD

So, get him out of his hiding place now.

PAGE

Good Master Ford, restrain yourself. You're making yourself
look ridiculous.

FORD

True, Master Page. Go upstairs, gentlemen. You'll something
entertaining soon. Follow me, gentlemen.

FORD exits.

SIR HUGH EVANS

He's full of wild fantasies and jealousy.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, this isn't how things are done in France. People
don't get jealous like this in France.

PAGE

No, follow him, gentlemen. Let's see how this search turns
out.

PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

MISTRESS PAGE

Hasn't our plot gotten two excellent results?

MISTRESS FORD

I don't know what makes me happier, tricking my husband
or tricking Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE

He was in such a panic when your husband asked who was
in the basket!

MISTRESS FORD

I'm half afraid he might need a wash ¹⁶, so throwing him
into the water will do him some good.

¹⁶ Mistress Ford implies that Falstaff may have urinated out of fear.

MISTRESS PAGE

To hell with him, dishonest scoundrel! I wish all men like
him had the same trick played on them.

MISTRESS FORD

I think my husband had some particular reason for
suspecting that Falstaff was here, because I've never seen
him get so wildly jealous before.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll come up with a plan to find that out, and we'll play more
tricks on Falstaff. He is so depraved that this one trick won't
cure him.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Re-enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

[Aside to MISTRESS FORD] Heard you that?

MISTRESS FORD

You use me well, Master Ford, do you?

FORD

Ay, I do so.

MISTRESS FORD

Heaven make you better than your thoughts!

FORD

195 Amen!

MISTRESS PAGE

You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.

FORD

Ay, ay; I must bear it.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

205 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 EVANS

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

210 By gar, I see 'tis an honest woman.

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

How about we send that foolish rotten woman, Mistress Quickly, to him, to give him an excuse for throwing him into the water, and then lead him on by setting up another meeting, so we can betray him with another punishment?

MISTRESS PAGE

Let's do it. Let's tell him that we want him to come over tomorrow at eight o'clock so we can make things up to him.

PAGE, FORD, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS re-enter.

FORD

I can't find him. Maybe that scoundrel bragged about doing something he couldn't actually accomplish.

MISTRESS PAGE

[To MISTRESS FORD so that only she can hear] Did you hear that?

MISTRESS FORD

You treat me well, Master Ford, do you?

FORD

Yes, I do.

MISTRESS FORD

I hope your behavior to me will be better than your suspicious thoughts about me!

FORD

Yes!


MISTRESS PAGE


You're tormenting yourself needlessly, Master Ford.

FORD

Yes, yes, I have to deal with it.

SIR HUGH EVANS

If there's anyone in the house, or the rooms, or the strong boxes , or the cupboards, God forgive my sins on Judgment Day!

 A strong box was a secure place for storing valuables.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, I don't think there is. There's nobody there.

PAGE

Come, come, Master Ford! Aren't you ashamed? What impulse, what devil created this fantasy in your mind? I wouldn't have your deranged temper for all the money in Windsor Castle.

FORD

It's my own fault, Master Page. I suffer because of it.

SIR HUGH EVANS

You suffer from a sense of guilt. Your wife is as honest as any woman you could find among five thousand women, and even five hundred.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By God, I see she's an honest woman.

FORD

Well, I promised to give you dinner. Come, come, walk in the Park. Please, pardon my behavior. I'll tell you later why I did this. Come on, wife, come on, Mistress Page. Please, pardon me. I'm pleading with you, pardon me.

PAGE

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

FORD

220 Any thing.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

FORD

Pray you, go, Master Page.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Exeunt

PAGE

Let's go inside, gentlemen.

[*To DOCTOR CAIUS and SIR HUGH EVANS*] But, trust me, we'll make fun of him.

[*To everyone*] I invite you to my house tomorrow morning for breakfast: afterwards, we'll hunt birds ¹⁸ together; I have a fine hawk for driving birds into the bush. Shall we do that?

¹⁸ When birding, or hunting for small birds, a trained hawk chased the birds into bushes, where hunters could shoot them.

FORD

Whatever you want.

SIR HUGH EVANS

If one person's going, I'll go too.

DOCTOR CAIUS

If one or two people are going, I'll be the third.

FORD

Please, let's go, Master Page.

SIR HUGH EVANS

[*To DOCTOR CAIUS*] Please, remember our plan tomorrow to deal with that lousy scoundrel, the host of the Garter Inn.

DOCTOR CAIUS

That's a good idea, by God, with all my heart!

SIR HUGH EVANS

That lousy scoundrel, to turn us into jokes and mock us!

MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, PAGE, FORD, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

Act 3, Scene 4

Shakespeare

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 PAGE

Alas, how then?

FENTON

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

ANNE PAGE

May be he tells you true.

FENTON

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

Shakescleare Translation

FENTON and ANNE PAGE enter.

FENTON

I see that I can't get your father to approve of me, so don't ask me to speak with him again, sweet Nan. ¹

¹ Nan is a nickname for Anne.

ANNE PAGE

Oh dear, what will we do then?

FENTON

Well, you have to make your own choice. He objects that my social class is too high. He's also afraid that, since I'm in trouble from spending too much, my only goal is to help myself by getting hold of his money. Besides that, he also objects to my wild behavior in my youth and my wild companions, and he says that it's impossible that I could love you except as a source of income.

ANNE PAGE

Maybe what he says is true.

FENTON

No, I swear by my future salvation in heaven! I admit that your father's money was the reason I wanted to marry you at first, Anne. Still, when I started wooing you, I learned that you are worth more than gold coins or bags of money. What I want now is you, yourself.

And 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

ANNE PAGE

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

They converse apart

Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and MISTRESS QUICKLY

SHALLOW

25 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

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

ANNE PAGE

I come to him.

Aside

ANNE PAGE

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

SHALLOW

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

SLENDER

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

SHALLOW

45 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

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

ANNE PAGE

Good Master Fenton, I'd still like to you to try and get my
father's approval. Keep trying, sir. If you can't get his
approval even if you have a good opportunity to ask and
you ask very humbly, well--come back and talk to me then.

FENTON and ANNE PAGE speak off to the side.

SHALLOW, SLENDER, and MISTRESS QUICKLY enter.

SHALLOW

Interrupt their conversation, Mistress Quickly. My nephew
wants to speak to her himself.

SLENDER

I'll speak to her one way or another. Good grief, I just have
to give it a try.

SHALLOW

Don't be discouraged.

SLENDER

No, she won't discourage me. I don't care about that,
except that I'm nervous.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Hey there, Master Slender would like to speak with you.

ANNE PAGE

I'm coming.

Aside to FENTON.

ANNE PAGE

This is the man my father wants me to marry. Even
someone full of repulsive flaws can seem attractive if he has
an income of three hundred pounds a year!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And how are you, good Master Fenton? Please, let me speak
to you for a moment.

SHALLOW

She's coming. Go up to her, nephew. Come on, you had a
father--be a man!

SLENDER

I had a father, Mistress Anne, my uncle can tell you funny
stories about him. Please, uncle, tell Mistress Anne that
funny story about how my father stole two geese from a
pen, good uncle.

SHALLOW

Mistress Anne, my nephew loves you.


SLENDER


Yes, I do, as much as I love any woman in Gloucestershire.

SHALLOW

He will support you financially as if you were a
gentlewoman.

SLENDER

Yes, I will, no matter what, as if I had the rank of a squire. 

 The title "squire" indicates the
rank of a gentleman, someone with
high social status.

SHALLOW

He will make you a hundred and fifty pounds jointure.

ANNE PAGE

Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

SHALLOW

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

ANNE PAGE

55 Now, Master Slender,--

SLENDER

Now, good Mistress Anne,--

ANNE PAGE

What is your will?

SLENDER

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

ANNE PAGE

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

SLENDER

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

Enter PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE

PAGE

70 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.

FENTON

Sir, will you hear me?

PAGE


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

Exeunt PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Speak to Mistress Page.

SHALLOW

He will agree to leave you one hundred and fifty pounds after he dies. 

ANNE PAGE

Good Master Shallow, let him speak for himself.

SHALLOW

Well now, I thank for that, I thank you for those comforting words. She wants to speak to you, nephew. I'll leave you.

ANNE PAGE

Now, Master Slender--


SLENDER

Now, good Mistress Anne--

ANNE PAGE

What is your will?

SLENDER

My will!  By God, that's a funny thing to say! I haven't made my will yet, thank God. I'm not so sick that I'm close to dying, thank God.

ANNE PAGE

I mean, what do you want with me, Master Slender?

SLENDER

Honestly, speaking for myself, I don't want anything from you. Your father and my uncle have come up with a plan for us to marry. If it's my luck to marry you, I'll take it. If not, good luck to everyone! They can tell you what's going on better than I can. You can ask your father, here he comes.

PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE enter.

PAGE

Now, Master Slender--love him, daughter Anne. Why, what's going on here? What's Master Fenton doing here? It's wrong of you to keep hanging around my house. I told you, my daughter's already engaged.

FENTON

Now, Master Page, don't get upset.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good Master Fenton, don't come here to see my daughter.

PAGE

She's not going to marry you.

FENTON

Sir, will you listen to me?


PAGE


No, good Master Fenton. Come in, son-in-law Slender, come in. Since you know my decision, your behavior is inappropriate, Master Fenton.

PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER exit.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Speak to Mistress Page.

 By law, a widow was owed one-third of her late husband's property. As this law was hard to enforce, couples sometimes made legal agreements prior to marriage called "jointures," specifying what the woman would inherit when her husband died.

 Anne means to ask Slender what he wills, or desires, but he takes the word in the sense of a legal will, the document specifying what should be done with a person's property after death.

FENTON

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

ANNE PAGE

85 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 PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

90 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;
95 Her father will be angry.

FENTON

Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FENTON

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Now heaven send thee good fortune!

Exit FENTON

MISTRESS QUICKLY

105 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
110 three; for so I have promised, and I'll be as good
as my word; but speciously for Master Fenton. Well,
I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from
my two mistresses: what a beast am I to slack it!

Exit

FENTON

Good Mistress Page, because I love your daughter with such
honorable intentions ⁵, I can't help trying to win her, in
spite of restraints, disapproval, and other people's
behavior. I can't back down. Please support me.

⁵ Pursuing a woman with honorable intentions or in a "righteous fashion," as Shakespeare puts it, means pursuing her with the goal of marriage.

ANNE PAGE

Good mother, don't let me marry that fool ⁶ over there.

⁶ Anne refers here to Slender.

MISTRESS PAGE

I don't want you to. I'm looking for a better husband for you.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

That's my master, Master Doctor Caius.

ANNE PAGE

Oh no, I'd rather be half-buried in the earth and have
people kill me by bowling at my head with turnips!

MISTRESS PAGE

Come on, don't get upset. Good Master Fenton, I won't
decide ahead of time to work either for you or against you.
Instead, I'll ask my daughter if she loves you, and I'll go
along with whatever she wants. Until then, good-bye, sir.
She has to come inside, or her father will get upset.

FENTON

Good-bye, good lady. Good-bye, Nan.

MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE exit.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I brought this about, you see. "No," I said, "will you throw
away your child on a fool, and a doctor? Think about Master
Fenton." I brought this about.

FENTON

Thank you, and please, at some point tonight, give my
sweet Nan this ring. *[He hands her a ring]* And here's
something for your troubles. *[He hands her money]*

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I hope God blesses you!

FENTON exits.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

He has a kind heart. A woman would endure any pains for a
man with such a kind heart. But I still wish that my master
would marry Mistress Anne; or I wish that Master Slender
would marry her; or, in fact, I wish Master Fenton would
marry her. I'll do what I can to help all three of them,
because I've promised to do so and I'll keep my promise,
but I'll especially help Master Fenton. Well, I have to take
another message to Sir John Falstaff from my two
mistresses. It's terrible of me to delay!

MISTRESS QUICKLY exits.

Act 3, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH

Shakescleare Translation

FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH enter.

FALSTAFF

Bardolph, I say,--

BARDOLPH

Here, sir.

FALSTAFF

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

Exit BARDOLPH

FALSTAFF

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

Re-enter BARDOLPH with sack

BARDOLPH

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

FALSTAFF

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

BARDOLPH

Come in, woman!

25

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FALSTAFF

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

BARDOLPH

30 With eggs, sir?

FALSTAFF

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

Exit BARDOLPH

FALSTAFF

How now!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

35 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.

FALSTAFF

Bardolph, I say--

BARDOLPH


I'm here, sir.

FALSTAFF

Go get me a quart of wine, and put a piece of hot toast in it.

BARDOLPH exits.

FALSTAFF

Is it possible that I could be carried in a basket like a
wheelbarrow of animal entrails from the butcher, and be
thrown into the Thames? Well, if anyone tries to play
another trick like that on me again, I'll take out my foolish
brains and butter  them and give them to the dog as a
New-Year's present. The scoundrels dumped me into the
river as carelessly as they would drown a blind dog's
puppies, fifteen at once. And you can tell from how big I am
that I sink quickly--no matter how deep the bottom is, I will
sink down to it. I would have been drowned, except that the
river bed had a gentle slope and was shallow. I hate death
by drowning because water makes a person swell up. What
would I have looked like if I had swelled up! I would have
been a huge corpse.

BARDOLPH re-enters with wine.

BARDOLPH

Mistress Quickly is here, sir, to speak with you.

FALSTAFF

Let me swallow some wine along with all the river water I
swallowed, because my stomach is as cold as if I had
swallowed snowballs to cool my kidneys off. Tell her to
come in.

BARDOLPH

Come in, woman!

MISTRESS QUICKLY enters.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

With your permission, please pardon me. I hope you're
doing well.

FALSTAFF

[*To BARDOLPH*] Take away these small glasses. Go prepare
me a half-gallon of wine so it will taste good.

BARDOLPH

With eggs in it, sir?

FALSTAFF

No, just pure wine. I don't want any chicken-offspring in my
drink.

BARDOLPH exits.


FALSTAFF


What's the news?


MISTRESS QUICKLY

Please, sir, I came here from Mistress Ford.

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford! I've had enough of ford. I was thrown into the
ford , my stomach is full of ford.

 "Buttered brains" may have been
a term for a foolish person.

 Falstaff puns on Mistress Ford's
name with "ford," meaning a shallow
place in a river or stream and, by
extension, the river.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

40 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

45 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

50 I will tell her.

FALSTAFF

Do so. Between nine and ten, sayest thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Eight and nine, sir.

FALSTAFF

Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

55 Peace be with you, sir.

Exit

FALSTAFF

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

Enter FORD

FORD

60 Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

And sped you, sir?

FALSTAFF


Very ill-favoredly, Master Brook.

FORD

How so, sir? Did she change her determination?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

It's a shame! good sir, it wasn't her fault. She has scolded
her servants, they misunderstood her erection.

 Mistress Quickly mistakenly says "erection" for "direction," or instructions. Falstaff picks up on her unintended sexual meaning to indicate his own frustration.

FALSTAFF

I misunderstood mine too, believing in a foolish woman's
promise.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Well, sir, she's so sorry about it that it would break your
heart if you saw her. Her husband is out hunting birds this
morning, and she wants you to come see her again between
eight and nine o'clock. I have to give her your answer
quickly. She'll make it up to you, I'm sure.

FALSTAFF

Well, I'll visit her. Tell her that; and tell her to reflect on
men's nature. Let her think about how easily damaged men
are, and then she can judge what kind of man I am.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'll tell her.

FALSTAFF

Do that. Between nine and ten, you said?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Between eight and nine, sir.

FALSTAFF

Well, get going. I won't miss the appointment.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I wish you a good day, sir.

MISTRESS QUICKLY exits.

FALSTAFF

I'm surprised I haven't heard from Master Brook. He
told me to wait for him here--I like getting money from him.
Oh, here he comes.

FORD enters.

FORD

God bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

Now, Master Brook, do you know what happened with me
and Ford's wife?

FORD

That, in fact, Sir John, is what I came to talk to you about.

FALSTAFF

Master Brook, I won't lie to you. I was at her house at the
time she told me to meet her.

FORD

And did you succeed, sir?

FALSTAFF

Things went very badly, Master Brook.

FORD

Why's that, sir? Did she change her mind?

FALSTAFF

70 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
75 provoked and instigated by his distemper, and, forsooth, to search his house for his wife's love.

FORD

What, while you were there?

FALSTAFF

While I was there.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

A buck-basket!

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

And how long lay you there?

FALSTAFF

90 Nay, you shall hear, Master Brook, what I have suffered to bring this woman to evil for your good. Being thus crammed in the basket, a couple of Ford's knaves, his hinds, were called forth by their mistress to carry me in the name of foul clothes to
95 Datchet-lane: they took me on their shoulders; met the jealous knave their master in the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket: I quaked for fear, lest the lunatic knave would have searched it; but fate, ordaining he should be a cuckold, held his hand. Well: on went he for a search, and away went I for foul clothes. But mark the sequel, Master Brook: I suffered the pangs of three several deaths; first, an intolerable
100 fright, to be detected with a jealous rotten bell-wether; next, to be compassed, like a good bilbo, in the circumference of a peck, hilt to point, heel to head; and then, to be stopped in, like a strong distillation, with stinking clothes that fretted in their own grease: think of that--a
110 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
115 thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, like a horse-shoe; think of that--hissing hot--think of that, Master Brook.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

No, Master Brook, but that sneaking cuckold her husband, Master Brook, who is always alarmed by jealousy, came in just as we were about to consummate our affair. After we had hugged, kissed, declared our love, and, so to speak, gone through all the preliminaries, he came with a crowd of friends behind him, who were compelled by his deranged temper to come along and search the house for his wife's lover.

FORD

What do you mean, while you were there?

FALSTAFF

While I was there.

FORD

And he looked for you and he couldn't find you?

FALSTAFF

I'll tell you about it. As luck would have it, Mistress Page came in. She told us that Ford was coming, and she came up with the idea, which Mistress Ford agreed to because she was so distraught, to carry me away in a laundry basket.

FORD

A laundry basket!

FALSTAFF

By God, a laundry basket! They crammed me in with dirty shirts and undergarments, dirty stockings, greasy napkins. That, Master Brook, was the most disgusting mix of revolting smells that ever hurt anyone's nose.

FORD

And how long did you lie in the basket?

FALSTAFF

No, I'll tell you, Master Brook, what I suffered so that I could corrupt this woman and help you out. When I was jammed into the basket, Mistress Ford called a couple of Ford's scoundrels, his servants, to carry me to Datchet-Lane and say that they were carrying a basket of dirty clothes. They laid the basket on their shoulders and ran into the jealous scoundrel their master at the door, who asked them once or twice what they had in their basket. I was shaking with fear, worrying that the insane scoundrel would search the basket, but Fate apparently decided that he was meant to be a cuckold and stopped him. Well, he went on with the search, and I went away disguised as dirty clothes. But listen to what happened next, Master Brook. I suffered the pains of three different kinds of death. First, I was unbearably frightened, worried that I would be discovered by a jealous rotten eunuch [4](#); next, in the container, I was bent over double like a sword [5](#), with my top touching my bottom and my heels touching my head; and then, I was stuffed like a cork in a wine bottle in with stinking clothes that were rotting in their own sweat. Think about that--a man in my bodily condition--think of that--a man who is as sensitive to heat as butter, a man who is constantly melting and sweating. It was a miracle that I didn't suffocate. And when this sweat bath was at its worst, when I was half-cooked in sweat like a Dutch dish [6](#), I was thrown into the Thames. Just as I was glowing hot, I was cooled off in the river like a horse-shoe [7](#). Think about that--hissing hot--think about that, Master Brook.

FORD

In all seriousness, I'm sorry that you suffered all this for my sake. My goal of sleeping with Mistress Ford looks like it will very difficult to accomplish. You won't try to seduce her again?

[4](#) A bell-wether is a castrated ram.

[5](#) The term "bilbo" in the original text refers to a sword whose strength was tested by being bent.

[6](#) Dutch food was considered to be particularly greasy.

[7](#) Horseshoes are shaped by heating metal; the shape is fixed by putting the hot metal into cold water.

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
125 eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

FORD

'Tis past eight already, sir.

FALSTAFF

Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall know how I speed; and the conclusion shall be crowned with your enjoying her. Adieu. You shall
130 have her, Master Brook; Master Brook, you shall cuckold Ford.

Exit

FORD

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

Exit

FALSTAFF

Master Brook, I would rather be thrown into a volcano like I was thrown into the river, than leave things in this state. Her husband is out hunting this morning. She sent me another message to meet her. The appointment is between eight and nine, Master Brook.

FORD

It's after eight already, sir.

FALSTAFF

Is it? I'll go to my appointment then. Come see me when it's convenient for you, and you'll hear how things went; and in the end you'll get to enjoy her. Good-bye. You'll have her, Master Brook, you'll make Ford a cuckold.

FALSTAFF exits.

FORD

Hm! Ha! Is this just my imagination? Am I dreaming? Am I asleep! Master Ford, wake up! Wake up, Master Ford! Your reputation is ruined, Master Ford. This is what it's like to be married! This is what you get for having clothes and laundry baskets! Well, I'll let everyone know what's going on. I'll catch the lustful man. He's at my house, he can't escape me, it would be impossible. He can't squeeze into a tiny coin-purse or into a box of pepper--but, in case the devil
8 that directs him also helps him, I'll search places where it would be impossible for him to hide. Although I can't avoid being a cuckold, the fact that I am a cuckold won't make me calmly accept being one. If I have horns that drive me crazy, I'll do just what the proverb says: I'll go horn-mad
9 .

FORD exits.

⁸ Ford, increasingly paranoid, may fear that the devil will transform Falstaff into a very tiny shape to hide in small places.

⁹ Horn-mad is a term for an especially insane form of anger; more particularly, it's the anger at being made a cuckold (given horns).

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS QUICKLY, and WILLIAM PAGE

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
5 suddenly.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll be with her by and by; I'll but bring my young man here to school. Look, where his master comes; 'tis a playing-day, I see.

Enter SIR HUGH EVANS

MISTRESS PAGE

10 How now, Sir Hugh! no school to-day?

SIR HUGH EVANS

No; Master Slender is let the boys leave to play.

Shakescleare Translation

MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS QUICKLY, and WILLIAM PAGE enter.

MISTRESS PAGE

Do you think he's already at Master Ford's?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'm sure he is by now, or he will be soon. But I'm telling you, he is furiously angry about being thrown into the water. Mistress Ford wants you to come over immediately.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll be with her soon. I'm just going to bring my young son here to school. Look, his schoolmaster's coming. I see that today must be a holiday.¹

SIR HUGH EVANS enters.

MISTRESS PAGE

Hello there, Sir Hugh! There's no school today?

SIR HUGH EVANS

No, Master Slender's given permission for the boys to play.

¹ Sir Hugh may be missing his schoolmaster's robe, or dressed to go hunting or wearing something else to show he's out of school.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Blessing of his heart!

MISTRESS PAGE

15 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 EVANS

Come hither, William; hold up your head; come.

MISTRESS PAGE

Come on, sirrah; hold up your head; answer your master, be not afraid.

SIR HUGH EVANS

20 William, how many numbers is in nouns?

WILLIAM PAGE

Two.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Truly, I thought there had been one number more, because they say, "Od's nouns."

SIR HUGH EVANS

Peace your tattlings! What is 'fair,' William?

WILLIAM PAGE

25 Pulcher.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Polecats! there are fairer things than polecats, sure.

SIR HUGH EVANS

You are a very simplicity 'oman: I pray you peace. What is 'lapis,' William?

WILLIAM PAGE

A stone.

SIR HUGH EVANS

30 And what is 'a stone,' William?

WILLIAM PAGE

A pebble.

SIR HUGH EVANS

No, it is 'lapis:' I pray you, remember in your prain.

WILLIAM PAGE

Lapis.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

WILLIAM PAGE

Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined, Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Bless his heart!

MISTRESS PAGE

Sir Hugh, my husband says our son William isn't getting any better at reading. Please, ask him some questions about his Latin grammar.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Come here, William. Stand up straight, come on.

MISTRESS PAGE

Come on, young man, stand up straight. Answer your master, don't be scared.


SIR HUGH EVANS

William, how many kinds of nouns are there?

WILLIAM PAGE

Two. 

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Really, I thought there were three, because the expression is, "Od's nouns." 


SIR HUGH EVANS

Stop your chattering! What is "beautiful," William?

WILLIAM PAGE

Pulcher.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Polecats ! I'm sure there are things more beautiful than polecats!

SIR HUGH EVANS

You're a very ignorant woman. I ask you to be quiet. What does "lapis" mean, William?


WILLIAM PAGE

A stone.

SIR HUGH EVANS

And what is "a stone," William?

WILLIAM PAGE

A pebble. 

SIR HUGH EVANS

No, it's "lapis." I ask you, please, remember that in your mind.


WILLIAM PAGE


Lapis.


SIR HUGH EVANS


That's a good boy, William. From what part of speech do we get articles?


WILLIAM PAGE


We get articles from the pronoun, and they are declined  like this: Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc.

 The two kinds of nouns are singular and plural.

 Mistress Quickly gives a corrupted version of the phrase "God's bones." Three is an odd number, and so "Od's nouns" indicates her "three nouns."

 Mistress Quickly mistakes William's "pulcher" (the Latin word for "fair" or "beautiful") for "polecat," a smelly mammal.

 William thinks that Sir Hugh is asking what a stone is, but he is actually asking the Latin word for stone.

 To decline a noun is to add suffixes to it indicating the number, case, and gender of the noun.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Nominativo, hig, hag, hog; pray you, mark:
genitivo, hujus. Well, what is your accusative case?

WILLIAM PAGE

40 Accusativo, hinc.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I pray you, have your remembrance, child,
accusative, hung, hang, hog.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

'Hang-hog' is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

45 Leave your prabbles, 'oman. What is the focative
case, William?

WILLIAM PAGE

O,--vocativo, O.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Remember, William; focative is caret.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And that's a good root.

SIR HUGH EVANS

'Oman, forbear.

MISTRESS PAGE

50 Peace!

SIR HUGH EVANS

What is your genitive case plural, William?

WILLIAM PAGE

Genitive case!

SIR HUGH EVANS

Ay.

WILLIAM PAGE

Genitive,--horum, harum, horum.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

55 Vengeance of Jenny's case! fie on her! never name
her, child, if she be a whore.


SIR HUGH EVANS


For shame, 'oman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY


60 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 'horum:' fie
upon you!


SIR HUGH EVANS

Nominativo, hig, hag, hog.  Please, pay attention.
Genitivo, hujus. Well, what is the article in the accusative
case?

 Sir Hugh's Welsh accent slightly
distorts his Latin.

WILLIAM PAGE

Accusativo, hinc. 

 William says "hinc" instead of
"hunc" (the proper masculine form of
the article).


SIR HUGH EVANS


Please, remember your lessons, child, the accusative is
hung, hang, hog.

MISTRESS QUICKLY


I bet that "hang-hog" is Latin for bacon.


SIR HUGH EVANS

Stop chattering, woman. What's the focative  case,
William?


 "Focative" is Sir Hugh's
pronunciation of "vocative". His
accent gives the word an obscene
suggestion.


WILLIAM PAGE

O  --vocativo, O.

 The vocative is the case used to
address a person; a noun in the
vocative is usually preceded by an
"O." William could also be using "oh"
as an exclamation of realization.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Remember, William, focative is caret. 

 "Caret" is Latin for "missing." Sir
Hugh means that the vocative case is
not found in English. Mistress Quickly
mistakes it for the vegetable "carrot."

MISTRESS QUICKLY

A carrot is a good root.


SIR HUGH EVANS


Woman, cut it out.

MISTRESS PAGE

Be quiet!

SIR HUGH EVANS

What is the genitive case  plural, William?

 The case of a noun indicates its
relationship to the other parts of a
sentence; the case is indicated by the
noun's inflection, or ending.

WILLIAM PAGE

Genitive case!


SIR HUGH EVANS


That's the one.

WILLIAM PAGE

Genitive--horum, harum, horum.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Jenny's case  is disgraceful! Shame on her! Don't talk
about her, child, if she's a whore.


 Mistress Quickly has mistaken
"genitive case" for "Jenny's case"
(situation), and "horum" for whore.


SIR HUGH EVANS

Shame on you, woman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

It's wrong of you teach the child words like that.

[To MISTRESS PAGE] he teaches him to hick and hack ,
which children learn fast enough on their own, and to say
the word "horum." Shame on you!

 "Hick" means "to hiccup," and
"hack" means "to slash" (and may

have a sexual sense as well as a violent one).

¹⁵ In Latin and other romance languages, nouns are gendered.

¹⁶ Sir Hugh may pronounce these words as "keys," "case," and "cods," slang terms for penis, vagina, and testicles.

SIR HUGH EVANS

'Oman, art thou lunatics? hast thou no understandings for thy cases and the numbers of the genders? Thou art as foolish Christian creatures as
65 I would desires.

MISTRESS PAGE

Prithce, hold thy peace.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

WILLIAM PAGE

Forsooth, I have forgot.

SIR HUGH EVANS

70 It is qui, quae, quod: if you forget your 'quies,' your 'quaes,' and your 'quods,' you must be preeches. Go your ways, and play; go.

MISTRESS PAGE

He is a better scholar than I thought he was.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

MISTRESS PAGE

75 Adieu, good Sir Hugh.

Exit SIR HUGH EVANS

MISTRESS PAGE

Get you home, boy. Come, we stay too long.

Exeunt

SIR HUGH EVANS

Woman, are you crazy? Don't you understand the cases, singular and plural, and genders ¹⁵? You're the most foolish creature I have ever seen.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'm telling you, be quiet.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Tell me now, William, how to decline pronouns.

WILLIAM PAGE

Actually, I've forgotten.

SIR HUGH EVANS

It is qui, quae, quod. If you forget your "quies," your "quaes," and your "quods," ¹⁶ you ought to be beaten. Go on and play, go.

MISTRESS PAGE

He's a better scholar than I thought he was.

SIR HUGH EVANS

He has a good active memory. Goodbye, Mistress Page.

MISTRESS PAGE

Goodbye, good Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS exits.

MISTRESS PAGE

Go along home, boy. Come on, we've been hanging around too long.

MISTRESS PAGE, WILLIAM PAGE, and MISTRESS QUICKLY exit.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS FORD

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

He's a-birding, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

10 Step into the chamber, Sir John.

Shakescleare Translation

FALSTAFF and MISTRESS FORD enter.

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, your sorrow has made the memory of my sufferings disappear. I see that you are devoted to me, and I tell you, I feel exactly the same way. I don't just love you, I also offer you all the trappings, compliments, and gestures that demonstrate love. But are you sure that your husband's away?

MISTRESS FORD

He's hunting birds, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE

[Offstage] Hey there, my friend Ford! Hey there!

MISTRESS FORD

Go into the room, Sir John.

Exit FALSTAFF

Enter MISTRESS PAGE

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Why, none but mine own people.

MISTRESS PAGE

Indeed!

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

MISTRESS FORD

Why?

MISTRESS PAGE

20 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, 'Peep out, peer
25 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

30 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
35 the knight is not here; now he shall see his own
foolery.

MISTRESS FORD

How near is he, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

I am undone! The knight is here.

MISTRESS PAGE

40 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.

FORD

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

45

Re-enter FALSTAFF

FALSTAFF

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

FALSTAFF exits.

MISTRESS PAGE enters.

MISTRESS PAGE

Hello there, my dear! Who's at home besides you?

MISTRESS FORD

Why, no one but my servants.

MISTRESS PAGE

Really!

MISTRESS FORD

Yes, really.

[*To MISTRESS PAGE so that only she can hear*] Speak louder.

MISTRESS PAGE


[*Loud enough for FALSTAFF to hear*] Really, I'm glad you
have no one else here.

MISTRESS FORD

Why?

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, woman, your husband is going crazy again. He's raving
to my husband. He rants about all married people. He
curses all women, of every kind, and he hits himself on the
forehead, crying, "Peep out, peep out," so that all the
craziness I've ever seen seems calm, civil, and patient
compared to his deranged behavior. I'm glad the fat knight
isn't here.

 Ford is telling his cuckold's horns to emerge from his forehead, since he's convinced that his wife has been unfaithful.

MISTRESS FORD

Why, does he talk about him?

MISTRESS PAGE

He talks about nothing but him, and he swears the fat
knight was carried out of the house in a basket the last time
he looked for him. He tells my husband that the knight is
here now, and he's pulled my husband and the rest of their
friends away from the hunting to try and prove again that
his suspicions are true. But I'm glad the knight isn't here
now. Now your husband will see how foolish he is.

MISTRESS FORD

How close is he, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

Very close, he's at the end of the street. He'll be here soon.

MISTRESS FORD

I'm ruined! The knight is here.

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, then, you're completely ruined, and the knight is a
dead man. What kind of woman are you! Get him out of
here, get him out of here! It's better that you be shamed
than that he be murdered.

MISTRESS FORD

How can I get him out of here? How can I get rid of him?
Should I put him into the basket again?

FALSTAFF re-enters.

FALSTAFF

No, I'm not getting into the basket again. Can't I leave
before he gets here?

MISTRESS PAGE

50 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. Creep into the kiln-hole.

FALSTAFF

55 Where is it?

MISTRESS FORD

60 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.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

How might we disguise him?

MISTRESS PAGE

65 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

70 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

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exit FALSTAFF

MISTRESS FORD

80 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

Unfortunately, three of Master Ford's brothers are guarding the door with pistols, so that no one can leave, otherwise you could have snuck out before he got here. But what are you doing here?

FALSTAFF

What will I do? I'll sneak up the chimney.

MISTRESS FORD

They always shoot their hunting guns up the chimney to clear them out. Sneak into the entrance to the oven.

FALSTAFF

Where is it?

MISTRESS FORD

He'll look there, I'm telling you. He has a system for keeping track of every cupboard, box, chest, trunk, hole, and vault, and he goes through them according to his system. We can't hide you in the house.

FALSTAFF

I'll leave then.

MISTRESS PAGE

If you go out looking like yourself, you'll be killed, Sir John. Unless you leave in disguise--

MISTRESS FORD

How can we disguise him?

MISTRESS PAGE

Oh dear, I don't know! We don't have a woman's dress big enough for him, otherwise he could put on a hat, and a scarf over his face, and a kerchief, and escape in disguise.

FALSTAFF

Dear ladies, think of something. Anything at all would be better than a disaster.

MISTRESS FORD

My maid's aunt, the fat woman who lives in Brentford, has a dress upstairs.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'm telling you, that will work. She's as big as he is, and her fringed hat and her muffler are there too. Run upstairs, Sir John.

MISTRESS FORD


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


MISTRESS PAGE

Quick, quick! We'll come dress you right away. Put on the dress in the meantime.

FALSTAFF exits.

MISTRESS FORD

I hope my husband meets him when he's dressed like this. He can't stand the old woman from Brentford. He swears she's a witch , he said she's not allowed to come to the house, and he's threatened to beat her up.

 The word "witch" had many implications in Shakespeare's time. Generally, it was used for someone (usually an elderly, unmarried woman) thought to have skills in casting spells and foretelling the future, who communicated with supernatural entities.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

But is my husband coming?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

90 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

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

Exit

MISTRESS PAGE

Hang him, dishonest varlet! we cannot misuse him enough.

100 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 eat all the draff.

Exit

Re-enter MISTRESS FORD with two Servants

MISTRESS FORD

105 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.

Exit

FIRST SERVANT

Come, come, take it up.

SECOND SERVANT

Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

FIRST SERVANT

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

Enter FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

I hope that the knight encounters your husband's cudgel³, and I hope that your husband uses it forcefully!

³ A cudgel was a large stick that could be used as a weapon.

MISTRESS FORD

But is my husband coming?

MISTRESS PAGE

Seriously, he is, and he talks about the basket too. I don't know how he found out about that.

MISTRESS FORD

We'll test him. I'll tell my servants to carry the basket again and run into him outside the door with it, like they did last time.

MISTRESS PAGE

No, he'll be here right away. Let's go dress Falstaff like the witch from Brentford.

MISTRESS FORD

First I'll tell my men what to do with the basket. Go up, I'll bring linen for him right away.

MISTRESS FORD exits.

MISTRESS PAGE

To hell with him, that dishonest scoundrel! We can't abuse him too much. We'll prove by our actions that wives can be merry and honest⁴ at the same time. The people who joke and laugh aren't the people who go on to behave dishonestly. It's an old saying, but it's true, "Still waters run deep."⁵

⁴ "Merry" can mean talkative, cheerful, fun-loving, ready to joke, flirtatious. "Honest" means truthful but, more particularly, chaste.

⁵ The proverb ran "The quiet swine eats all the hogwash," meaning that still, or quiet, women were the ones who behaved immorally.

MISTRESS PAGE exits.

MISTRESS FORD re-enters with two servants.

MISTRESS FORD

Go, young men, take the basket on your shoulders again. Your master is right outside the door. If he tells you to, obey him and put the basket down. Quickly, get going.

MISTRESS FORD exits.

FIRST SERVANT

Come on, come on, pick it up.

SECOND SERVANT

I hope it doesn't have a knight in it this time.

FIRST SERVANT

I hope not. I'd rather carry a basket full of lead.

FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS enter.

FORD

Yes, but if it turns out to be true, Master Page, and he has made a fool out of me, do you have any way to fix that? Put down the basket, you lowlife! Somebody call my wife. What a lucky lover! Oh you panderling⁶ rascals! There's a group, a gang, a pack, a plot against me--now the devil will be shamed. Hey there, wife, I'm talking to you! Come out, come out! Let's see what innocent clothes you were sending to the laundry!

⁶ Someone is "panderly" if he or she acts like a pander--helping to arrange illicit sexual encounters.

PAGE

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

120 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.

Re-enter MISTRESS FORD

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

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

Pulling clothes out of the basket

PAGE

This passes!

MISTRESS FORD

135 Are you not ashamed? let the clothes alone.

FORD

I shall find you anon.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

FORD

Empty the basket, I say!

MISTRESS FORD

140 Why, man, why?

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

PAGE

Here's no man.

SHALLOW

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

PAGE

Why, this goes beyond all the limits of acceptable behavior, Master Ford. You can't be allowed to run around loose any longer, you should be put in a straitjacket.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Why, this is crazy! He's as mad as a mad dog!

SHALLOW

Really, Master Ford, this isn't acceptable, it really isn't.

FORD

I agree, sir, it's not.

MISTRESS FORD re-enters.

FORD

Come here, Mistress Ford. Mistress Ford the honest wife, the modest wife, the virtuous person, whose husband is a jealous fool! I'm suspicious for no good reason, mistress, am I?

MISTRESS FORD

I swear to God that you are, if you suspect that I'm unfaithful.

FORD

Well said, you brazen women, you stick to your story! Come out, sir!

FORD pulls clothes out of the basket.

PAGE

This goes beyond all limits of good behavior!

MISTRESS FORD

Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Leave the clothes alone.

FORD

I'll find you soon.

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is unreasonable! Will you go through your wife's clothes? Cut it out.

FORD

I demand you empty the basket!

MISTRESS FORD

Why, man, why?

FORD

Master Page, as sure as I'm a man, I'm sure that someone was carried out of my house yesterday in this basket. Why shouldn't he be in there again? I know that he's in my house, my information is accurate. It's reasonable of me to be jealous. Pull out all the linen.

MISTRESS FORD

Anyone hiding in there must be really tiny.

PAGE

There's no one in here.

SHALLOW

By my faith, this isn't acceptable, Master Ford. Your behavior reflects very badly on you.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Master Ford, you should pray and ignore the fantasies in your brain. This is just jealousy.

FORD

Well, he's not here I seek for.

PAGE

No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

Old woman! what old woman's that?

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

I'll prat her.

Beating him

FORD

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

Exit FALSTAFF

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

185 Hang her, witch!

FORD


Well, the person I'm looking for isn't here.

PAGE

No, and he's not anywhere else except in your brain.

FORD

Help me search the house one more time. If I don't find what I'm looking for, if I don't give you any evidence for why I should be so passionately jealous, then let me be a laughing-stock for you forever. Let them say things like, "Since he was as jealous as Ford, that looked for his wife's lover in a hollow walnut." Bear with me one more time, search the house with me one more time.

 Only an irrationally jealous man (as the others accuse Ford of being) would look for a human being inside something as small as a walnut shell.

MISTRESS FORD

Hey there, Mistress Page! You and the old woman should come downstairs, my husband is coming into the bedroom.


FORD


Old woman! Who is that old woman?

MISTRESS FORD

It's my maid's aunt from Brentford.

FORD

A witch, a hussy , an old cheating hussy! Haven't I forbid her to come into my house? She comes on an errand, does she? We're just foolish men, we don't know what women get up to when they pretend to be telling fortunes. She uses charms, spells, voodoo dolls, and other tricks that we can't understand and don't know anything about. Come downstairs, you witch, you hag, you. Come downstairs, I say!

 In the original text, Ford uses the word "quean," slang for a prostitute or sexually loose woman.

MISTRESS FORD

No, good, sweet husband! Good gentlemen, don't let him hit the old woman.


FALSTAFF re-enters in woman's clothes with MISTRESS PAGE.

MISTRESS PAGE

Come on, Mother Prat. Come, give me your hand.

FORD

I'll prat  her.

 "Prat" may have been a term for buttocks; Ford means that he will hit the old woman on the buttocks (and elsewhere).

FORD beats FALSTAFF.

FORD

Get out the door, you witch, you hag, you old bag, you hussy, you lying old woman! Out, out! I'll cast spells on you, I'll tell your fortune.

FALSTAFF exits.

MISTRESS PAGE

Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I think you have killed the old woman.

MISTRESS FORD

No, he's going to kill her.

[To FORD] Well, this certainly makes you look good!

FORD

To hell with this witch!

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

FORD

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

PAGE

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

Exeunt FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

MISTRESS PAGE

195 Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

205 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.

MISTRESS FORD

Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt

SIR HUGH EVANS

I swear, I think the woman is really a witch. I don't like it when women have large beards ¹⁰. I see a large beard under his ¹¹ muffler.

FORD

Will you come with me, gentlemen? I ask you, please come with me. See what the outcome of my jealousy is. If it turns out that there's no reason for me to be jealous, never listen to me again.

PAGE

Let's humor him a little longer. Come on, gentlemen.

FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good lord, it was pitiful how much he beat him up.

MISTRESS FORD

No, I swear, it wasn't. He didn't have any pity, in my opinion.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll take his stick ¹², hallow it out, and hang it over the altar ¹³. It has done excellent work.

MISTRESS FORD

What do you think? Since we are women ¹⁴ and we have a clear conscience, is it permissible for us to take any more revenge on him?

MISTRESS PAGE

I'm sure that his lust has been driven out of him by now. Unless the devil has completely possessed him, he won't ever try to ruin ¹⁵ us again.

MISTRESS FORD

Should we tell our husbands about the tricks we played on him?

MISTRESS PAGE

Yes, by all means--at the very least, to get rid of your husband's jealous suspicions. If they want to torment the poor badly-behaved fat knight any more, we'll still help them do it.

MISTRESS FORD

I bet they'll want him humiliated in public, and I think there wouldn't be a fitting conclusion to this plot unless he were publicly humiliated.

MISTRESS PAGE

Come on, let's put our minds to it ¹⁶ then, let's come up with an idea. I don't want to let our momentum die down.

MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD exit.

¹⁰ As in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, witches were represented as having beards.

¹¹ Sir Hugh means "her," but may be confused by the beard. He does not realize Falstaff's true identity.

¹² Apparently Ford beat Falstaff with his cudgel.

¹³ Sacred religious relics, like clothes belonging to a saint, would be honored by being placed near an altar.

¹⁴ The wives remark more than once that they take revenge on Falstaff on behalf of all women.

¹⁵ Falstaff's advances would ruin the women financially (he wants to use them to get their husbands' money) and socially (the affair would ruin their reputations).

¹⁶ In the original text, Mistress Page uses metaphors drawn from blacksmithing; blacksmiths heat metal in a forge in order to shape it. Once it cools, the metal can no longer be shaped.

Act 4, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter Host and BARDOLPH

BARDOLPH

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

HOST

5 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

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

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

The HOST and BARDOLPH enter.

BARDOLPH

Sir, the Germans would like to use three of your horses. The duke will be at court tomorrow, and they're going there to see him.

HOST

Who is this duke who's coming so secretly? I didn't hear anything about him at court. Let me speak with the gentlemen. Do they speak English?

BARDOLPH

Yes, sir. I'll call them in to see you.

HOST

They can have my horses, but I'll make them pay, I'll make them pay a lot. They've taken over my house for the last week so that I had to turn away other guests. They need to pay up--I'll make them pay a lot. Let's go.

The HOST and BARDOLPH exit.

Act 4, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS

SIR HUGH EVANS

'Tis one of the best discretions of a woman 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

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

PAGE

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

FORD

There is no better way than that they spoke of.

PAGE

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

Shakescleare Translation

PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS enter.

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is one of the cleverest plots that I've ever known a woman to come up with.

PAGE


And he sent you both those letters at the same time?

MISTRESS PAGE

Within fifteen minutes of each other.

FORD

Forgive me, wife. From now on, do what you like. I'll sooner suspect that the sun is cold than suspect that you are unfaithful. I used to distrust you, but now I trust you completely.

 In the original text, Ford uses religious metaphors; a "heretic" is someone who denies religious "faith," or teachings. He may also kneel as he asks his wife's forgiveness.

PAGE

That's enough, that's enough, no more. Don't go overboard in asking forgiveness from your wife the same way you went overboard in offending her. But let's put our plan into action. For a good joke in front of the whole town, let's have our wives make another appointment to meet with this old fat man, so we can catch him and disgrace him.

FORD

There's no better plan than the one they described to us.

PAGE

What? Tell him him they'll meet him in the park at midnight? No, no! He'll never come.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

PAGE

25 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,
30 Doth all the winter-time, 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:
35 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.

PAGE

Why, yet there want not many that do fear
40 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.

PAGE

Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come:
45 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
50 Like urchins, ouphes 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
55 With some diffused song: upon their sight,
We two in great amazedness will fly:
Then let them all encircle him about
And, fairy-like, to-pinch the unclean knight,
And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,
60 In their so sacred paths he dares to tread
In shape profane.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

You said he's been thrown into the river and beaten terribly when he was dressed as an old woman. I think he'll be so traumatized by now that he won't come. I think his body has suffered so much that he can't have any more sexual desire left in him.

PAGE

I agree.

MISTRESS FORD

Just figure out what you'll do to him when he comes, and let the two of us figure out how to get him there.

MISTRESS PAGE

There's an old story that Herne the hunter ², who used to be a gamekeeper here in Windsor forest, walks around an oak at the quiet hour of midnight all winter. He has big jagged horns and he strikes the trees with disease and casts spells on the cattle and makes the dairy cows give blood instead of milk and shakes a chain in the most terrible and frightening way. You've heard stories about a spirit like that, and you know very well that superstitious, foolish people in the old days heard this story of Herne the hunter and passed it on to us as a true fact.

PAGE

Why, there are still plenty of people who are afraid to walk by Herne's oak late at night. But what does that matter?

MISTRESS FORD

Well, this is our plan--that Falstaff will meet us at the oak. ³

PAGE

Well, let's assume he'll come. And when you've brought Falstaff to the oak disguised as Herne the hunter, what will we do to him? What's your idea?

MISTRESS PAGE

We've thought about that too, and here's our idea. We'll get my daughter Nan Page and my young son and three or four more children their age, and we'll dress them up in green and white like goblins, elvish children, and elves, with crowns of wax candles on their heads, and rattles in their hands. And right when Mistress Ford and I meet Falstaff, they should immediately rush out of a pit singing some incoherent song. When we see them, we'll run away in fright, and then they should circle the dirty old knight and pinch him the way fairies are supposed to do, and ask him why he dares to intrude his foul body into their sacred paths at the hour when fairies are out dancing ⁴.

MISTRESS FORD

And until he tells the truth, the so-called fairies should pinch him hard and burn him with their candles.

MISTRESS PAGE

Then when he's confessed the truth, we'll all reveal ourselves, take off his horns, and make fun of him the whole way home to Windsor.

FORD

The children should practice this, or they'll never get it right.

² Herne the hunter is a spirit or ghost thought to haunt Windsor Forest.

³ In other versions of the text, Mistress Ford's next sentence is "Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head."

⁴ Fairies were thought to dance in the woods late at night, and to pinch humans who bothered them.

SIR HUGH EVANS

70 I will teach the children their behaviors; and I
will be like a jack-an-apes also, to burn the
knight with my taber.

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

PAGE

That silk will I go buy.

Aside

PAGE

And in that time
Shall Master Slender steal my Nan away
80 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

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Exeunt PAGE, FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exit MISTRESS FORD

MISTRESS PAGE

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;
95 And he my husband best of all affects.
The doctor is well money'd, and his friends
Potent at court: he, none but he, shall have her,
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.

Exit

SIR HUGH EVANS

I'll teach the children what to do, and I'll dress up like a
mischievous monkey, so I can burn the knight with my
candle.

FORD

That's an excellent idea. I'll go and buy them masks.

MISTRESS PAGE


My Anne will be the queen of the fairies, finely dressed in a
white gown.

PAGE

I'll go buy the silk for that.

Aside

PAGE

And while all this is going on, Master Slender will sneak
away with my Nan and marry her at [Eton](#) .

[To MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD] Go send a
message to Falstaff right away.

FORD

No, I'll go see him disguised as Master Brook. He'll tell me
all about his plans. I'm sure of it, he'll come.

MISTRESS PAGE

Don't worry about that. Go get us the props and costumes
for our fairies.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Let's get going. It's an admirable joke and a very well-
intentioned trick.

PAGE, FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS exit.

MISTRESS PAGE


Go, Mistress Ford, send a message to Sir John to find out
what he's thinking.

MISTRESS FORD exits.

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll go see the doctor. He has my support, and I won't let
anyone but him marry Nan Page. That man Slender is an
idiot, despite the fact that he has a lot of land, and he's the
one my husband favors most. The doctor also has a lot of
money and powerful friends at court. He, no one but he,
will have her, even if twenty thousand worthier people
came to ask for her.

MISTRESS PAGE exits.

 Eton was a town across the river
from Windsor.

Act 4, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter Host and SIMPLE

HOST

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

SIMPLE

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

Shakesclare Translation

The HOST and SIMPLE enter.

HOST

What do you want, you buffoon? What is it, you stupid man?
Speak, breathe, talk. Be brief, short, quick, snappy.

SIMPLE

Well, sir, I have a message for Sir John Falstaff from Master
Slender.

HOST

5 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; hell speak like an Anthropophaginian unto thee: knock, I say.

SIMPLE

10 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

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

FALSTAFF

[Above] How now, mine host!

HOST

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

Enter FALSTAFF

FALSTAFF

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

SIMPLE

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

FALSTAFF

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

SIMPLE

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

FALSTAFF

I spake with the old woman about it.

SIMPLE

And what says she, I pray, sir?

FALSTAFF

35 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

40 What are they? let us know.

HOST

Ay, come; quick.

HOST

There's his bedroom, his house, his castle, his full-size bed and his camp bed. It's freshly painted with the story of the Prodigal Son. ¹ Go knock on the door and call him. He'll talk to you like a cannibal ². Knock, I'm telling you.

¹ *The Prodigal Son is a parable told by Jesus Christ about a young, profligate man.*

² *The Host uses the extravagant term "Anthropophaginian" for "cannibal."*

SIMPLE

There's an old woman, a fat woman, who just went into his room. I'll invite myself to stay, if I may, until she comes downstairs. I'd like to speak with her, in fact.

HOST

Ha! A fat woman! The knight might get robbed. I'll call him. My fine knight! My bold Sir John! Speak with your soldier's lungs: are you there? It's your host, your drinking companion ³, calling you.

³ *Ephesians (from the isle of Ephesus) were known as heavy drinkers.*

FALSTAFF

[Upstairs] How are you, my host?

HOST

There's a vagabond gypsy here waiting for the fat woman to come downstairs. Let her come down, my fine fellow, let her come down. I keep a respectable inn--shame on your secret intrigues!

FALSTAFF enters.

FALSTAFF

There was an old fat woman with me just now, my host, but she's gone.

SIMPLE

Please, sir, was it the wise woman ⁴ of Brentford?

⁴ *"Wise woman" was a more positive version of a witch, who used magic for good.*

FALSTAFF

Yes, in fact, it was, you empty-headed young man. What did you want with her?

SIMPLE

My master, sir, Master Slender, saw her going through the streets and he wanted to ask her whether a man named Nym, who stole a chain from him, has the chain or not.

FALSTAFF

I talked to the old woman about that.

SIMPLE

And what did she say, sir?

FALSTAFF

Well, she says the same man that stole Master Slender's chain also cheated him out of it.

SIMPLE

I wish I could have spoken with the woman myself. There were other things I would have liked to ask her.

FALSTAFF

Like what? Tell me.

HOST

Yes, come on, quickly.

SIMPLE

I may not conceal them, sir.

HOST

Conceal them, or thou diest.

SIMPLE

45 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

50 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.

Exit

HOST

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

FALSTAFF

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

Enter BARDOLPH

BARDOLPH

Out, alas, sir! cozenage, mere cozenage!

HOST

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

BARDOLPH

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

HOST

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


Enter SIR HUGH EVANS

SIR HUGH EVANS

70 Where is mine host?

SIMPLE

I'm not allowed to conceal them, sir.

 Simple mistakenly says "conceal" instead of "reveal."

HOST

Conceal them, or die.

SIMPLE

Well, sir, it wasn't about anything except Mistress Anne Page. I wanted to ask if my master will end up marrying her or not.

FALSTAFF

Yes, yes, he will.

SIMPLE

He will what, sir?

FALSTAFF

He will either marry her or not. Go, tell him the woman told me so.

SIMPLE

May I be so bold as to tell him that, sir?

FALSTAFF

Yes, sir. No one could be bolder than you.

SIMPLE

Thank you, sir. I'll make my master happy with this good news.


SIMPLE exits.

HOST

You are wise, you are wise, Sir John. Was there a witch with you?

FALSTAFF

Yes, there was, my host. She taught me more than I had ever learned before in my life, and I didn't pay anything for this knowledge either, but instead I got a reward for learning.

 Falstaff's "reward" may have a sexual connotation.

BARDOLPH enters.

BARDOLPH


Oh no, sir! Cheating, flat-out cheating!

HOST

Where are my horses? Tell me some good news about them, you scoundrel.

BARDOLPH

They ran away with the cheaters. As soon as I passed Eton, they threw me off the horse into a swamp of mud, and they spurred the horses to ride away like three German devils, like three Doctor Faustuses.

 In Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus*, the Doctor makes a deal with the devil to obtain magic powers. In one scene, he has three devils take the form of horses.

HOST

They've only gone to meet the duke, scoundrel, don't say they fled. Germans are honest people.

SIR HUGH EVANS enters.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Where is the host?

HOST

What is the matter, sir?

SIR HUGH EVANS

75 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 Readins, of Maidenhead, of Colebrook, of horses and money. I tell you for good will, look you: you are wise and full of gibes and vlouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well.

Exit

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS

DOCTOR CAIUS

80 Vere is mine host de Jarteer?

HOST

Here, master doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Exit

HOST

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

Exeunt Host and BARDOLPH

FALSTAFF

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

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

FALSTAFF

Now, whence come you?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

From the two parties, forsooth.

FALSTAFF

105 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

110 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.

HOST

What's the matter, sir?

SIR HUGH EVANS

Be careful about your guests. A friend of mine who just arrived in town told me about three cheating Germans who have cheated all the hosts out of horses and money, in Readins, Maidenhead, and Colebrook ⁸. I'm looking out for you, you know. You're smart and full of fun and jokes, and it isn't right for you to be cheated. Take care.

⁸ These are three towns close to Windsor.

SIR HUGH EVANS exits.

DOCTOR CAIUS enters.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Where is the host of the Garter?

HOST

Here, Master Doctor, confused and in a messy situation.

DOCTOR CAIUS

I'm not sure what you mean by that, but someone told me that you were making big preparations to welcome a German duke. I know for a fact that the court isn't expecting any duke. I'm telling you this to help you out. Goodbye.

DOCTOR CAIUS exits.

HOST

Raise the alarm, scoundrel, go! Help me, knight, I'm ruined! Run, run, raise the alarm, scoundrel! I'm ruined!

The HOST and BARDOLPH exit.

FALSTAFF

I wish everyone would be tricked, since I've been tricked and beaten up also. If anyone at court heard how I disguised myself twice ⁹, and how I was dunked in the river and beaten with a stick while I was disguised, they would laugh at me until my fat melted out of me like boot-grease. I bet they would make fun of me with their wonderful wit until I shriveled up like a dried pear. I've never done well in life since I started cheating at cards. Well, if I had enough breath to pray, I would apologize to God for the bad things I've done.

⁹ Falstaff was disguised first as a basket of dirty clothes and second as an old woman.

MISTRESS QUICKLY enters.

FALSTAFF

Now, where did you come from?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

From the two women, in fact.

FALSTAFF

Let them both go to hell! And then they'll both get what they deserve. I've suffered more because of them than a man's unstable nature is able to put up with.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And haven't they suffered too? Yes, I bet they have, speciously ¹⁰ one of them. Mistress Ford, that dear woman, was beaten black and blue so that you can't see a spot of white skin on her.

¹⁰ Mistress Quickly mistakes "speciously" (falsely) for "specially."

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY


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

125 Come up into my chamber.

Exeunt

FALSTAFF

Why are you talking to me about black and blue? I was
beaten until I was all the colors of the rainbow, and I was
almost arrested for being the witch of Brentford. If it hadn't
been for my admirably quick wit, and my ability to imitate
the behavior of an old woman, the rascally policeman
would have put me in the stocks , the public stocks, for
being a witch.


MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, let me talk to you in your room. I'll tell you how things
are going, and I bet you'll like what you hear. Here's a letter
that will explain things. My dears, it's so much trouble to get
you together! I'm sure that one of you must be a great
sinner, since God keeps punishing you.

FALSTAFF

Come up to my room.

MISTRESS QUICKLY and FALSTAFF exit.

 The stocks were a wooden punishment device with holes for hands and head, into which a culprit would be locked and left for some time for the public to see.

Act 4, Scene 6

Shakespeare

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
5 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;
10 Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,
So far forth as herself might be her chooser,
Even to my wish: I have a letter from her
Of such contents as you will wonder at;
The mirth whereof so larded with my matter,
15 That neither singly can be manifested,
Without the show of both; fat Falstaff
Hath a great scene: the image of the jest
I'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just 'twixt twelve and one,
20 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
25 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,
30 And at the deanery, where a priest attends,
Straight marry her: to this her mother's plot
She seemingly obedient likewise hath
Made promise to the doctor. Now, thus it rests:
Her father means she shall be all in white,
35

Shakescleare Translation

FENTON and the HOST enter.

HOST

Master Fenton, don't talk to me, I'm feeling very low. I'm
going to give up on everything.

FENTON

Just listen to me. Help me carry out my plan, and I promise,
on my word as a gentleman, that I'll give you a hundred
pounds more than you lost, in gold.

HOST

I'll listen to you, Master Fenton. At the very least I'll keep
what you say a secret.

FENTON

From time to time I've told you about how much I love Anne
Page. She loves me in return, insofar as she can choose her
own husband, just the way I would want. I've received a
letter from her that said some things that will surprise you.
The humorous material in it was so mixed up with the
serious material that you couldn't look at one without
looking at the other. There's a description of a big scene
involving fat Falstaff-- I'll show you the whole description of
the joke. Pay attention, my good host. Tonight at Herne's
oak, just between midnight and one o'clock, my sweet Nan
is supposed to dress up as the Fairy Queen--she explains
why here. While she's disguised, and while lots of other
pranks are happening at the same time, her father has
ordered her to sneak away with Slender and go with him to
Eton to be married immediately. She agreed to this. Now,
sir, her mother, who strongly opposes Anne's marriage to
Slender and is determined that she will marry Doctor Caius,
has ordered her to sneak away in the same way with Doctor
Caius while everyone is distracted, and to go to the deanery
where a priest will be waiting to marry them. Anne also
agreed to her mother's plot and promised to marry the
doctor. Now, here's how things stand. Her father's plan is
that she'll be dressed all in white, so Slender will recognize
her; when Slender sees an opportunity to take her hand,
she'll go with him. Because they will all be wearing masks,
her mother also planned a way for the doctor to recognize
her: Anne will be elegantly dressed in loose green clothes

And in that habit, when Slender sees his time
To take her by the hand and bid her go,
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended,
The better to denote her to the doctor,
For they must all be mask'd and vizarded,
40 That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,
With ribands 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

45 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,
50 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.

55

Exeunt

with hanging ribbons flying around her head. And the
doctor, when he spots a good opportunity, is supposed to
pinch her hand, and Anne said she will leave with him when
she gets that signal.

HOST

Who is she intending to trick, her father or her mother?

FENTON

Both, my good host, so she can go with me. Here's the plan.
You'll get the vicar to wait for me at the church between
midnight and one o'clock so he can unite us in legal
marriage.

HOST

Well, execute your plan carefully. I'll go to the vicar. You
bring the woman, and I'll make sure you have a priest.

FENTON

I will be in your debt forever--and I will also give you a
reward immediately.

FENTON and the HOST exit.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FALSTAFF

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

Exit MISTRESS QUICKLY

Enter FORD

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

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


Shakescleare Translation

FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY enter.

FALSTAFF

Please, no more chattering, go. I'll keep the appointment.
This is the third time—I hope the third try will turn out to be
the lucky one. Get going. They say there's magical power in
odd numbers when it comes to birth, luck, or death. Get
going!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I'll get you a [chain](#) , and I'll see what I can do to get you a
pair of horns.

FALSTAFF

Get going, I say, it's getting late. Hold your head up and
strut.

MISTRESS QUICKLY exits.


FORD enters.

FALSTAFF

Hello there, Master Brook! Master Brook, things will come
to a conclusion tonight, or else they never will. Be in the
Park around midnight, at Herne's oak, and you'll see things
that will astonish you.

FORD


Didn't you go see her yesterday, sir, like you told me you
had planned?

 *Herne the Hunter was supposed to have horns and shake a chain (as Mistress Quickly describes in Act 4, Scene 4).*


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,
 20 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
 25 with me: I'll tell you all, Master Brook. Since I plucked geese, played truant and whipped top, I knew not what 'twas to be beaten till lately. Follow me: I'll tell you strange things of this knave Ford, on whom to-night I will be revenged, and I
 30 will deliver his wife into your hand. Follow. Strange things in hand, Master Brook! Follow.

*Exeunt***FALSTAFF**

I did go to see her, Master Brook, dressed like I am now, like a poor old man, but when I left her, Master Brook, I was dressed like a poor old woman. That scoundrel Ford, her husband, had the greatest fit of jealousy, Master Brook, that ever drove someone crazy. I'll tell you what happened. He beat me up terribly while I was disguised as a woman--but when I'm dressed as a man, Master Brook, even the strongest man  with the largest spear doesn't scare me, for I know that life is short. I'm in a hurry, come with me, I'll tell you everything, Master Brook. Since I was a child playing pranks, skipping school and spinning a top, I have never been beaten like that until now. Follow me. I'll tell you some extraordinary things about this scoundrel Ford, who I'm going to take revenge on tonight, and I'll get you access to his wife. Follow me. Extraordinary things are about to happen, Master Brook! Follow me.

FALSTAFF and FORD exit.

 Goliath was a gigantic man in the Old Testament whose spear was described as a weaver's beam. A shuttle is used in weaving to pull thread through the loom; in the Book of Job, human life is described as a shuttle (hence Falstaff's reference in the original text).

Act 5, Scene 2

Shakespeare

*Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER***PAGE**

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

SLENDER

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

SHALLOW

That's good too: but what needs either your 'mum' or her 'budget?' the white will decipher her well
 10 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.

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

*PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER enter.***PAGE**

Come on, come on. We'll lie in the ditch near the castle until we see the light from our fairies. Son-in-law Slender, don't forget about my daughter.


SLENDER

Yes, indeed. I've talked to her and we have a password so we'll recognize each other: she'll be wearing white, I'll come to her and say, "mum," she'll say "budget," and that's how we'll recognize each other.


SHALLOW

That's a good idea, too, but why do you need to say "mum," and why does she need to say "budget"? You'll recognize her because she'll be wearing white. The clock has struck ten o'clock.

PAGE

It's a dark night, a fitting night for candles and fairies. May God give us good luck carrying out our plot! No one intends to do anything evil except the devil, and we'll recognize him by his horns . Let's go, follow me.

PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER exit.

 Horns are a traditional attribute of the devil; Falstaff, of course, will also be wearing horns on this night.

Act 5, Scene 3


Shakespeare


*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 band, away with her to the deanery, and dispatch it quickly. Go before into the Park: we two must go together.

Shakescleare Translation

*MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and DOCTOR CAIUS enter.***MISTRESS PAGE**

Master Doctor, my daughter will be wearing green. When you see a good opportunity, take her by the hand, lead her away to the dean's house , and get the marriage over with quickly. Go into the Park ahead of us: the two of us have to go in together.

 A dean is a clergyman who would perform religious functions like marriages.

DOCTOR CAIUS

5 I know vat I have to do. Adieu.

MISTRESS PAGE

Fare you well, sir.

Exit DOCTOR CAIUS

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

15 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

20 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

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

Exeunt

DOCTOR CAIUS

I know what I need to do. Good-bye.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good luck, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS exits.

MISTRESS PAGE

My husband won't be as happy at our tricking Falstaff as he'll be upset about the doctor marrying his daughter, but it doesn't matter. It's better to be scolded a little than to endure a big catastrophe.

MISTRESS FORD

Where is Nan right now and her group of fairies, and the Sir Hugh, the Welsh devil?

MISTRESS PAGE

They're all lying in a pit right near Herne's oak, with their candles hidden. They'll shine them out the moment we meet Falstaff.

MISTRESS FORD

Falstaff will be surprised.

MISTRESS PAGE

If he's not surprised, he'll be made fun of--and if he is surprised, he'll be made fun of [even more](#) ².

² If Falstaff isn't surprised at the night's events, it means that he was expecting to be caught, but acted anyway. If he is surprised, it means that he foolishly thought he would get away with his plan. Either way, he's an object for mockery.

MISTRESS FORD

We'll betray him skillfully.

MISTRESS PAGE

When it comes to lustful men like him, people who betray them don't do anything wrong.

MISTRESS FORD

It's almost time. Let's go to the oak!

MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE exit.

Act 5, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter SIR HUGH EVANS, disguised, with others as Fairies

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

SIR HUGH EVANS enters disguised as a fairy, with other townspeople disguised as fairies.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Nimbly, move nimbly, fairies. Come on, and remember your instructions: be bold, please; follow me into the pit, and when I give the signal, do what I tell you. Come on, come on, nimbly, nimbly.

SIR HUGH EVANS and others exit.

Act 5, Scene 5

Shakespeare

*Enter FALSTAFF disguised as Herne***FALSTAFF**

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

*Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE***MISTRESS FORD**

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

FALSTAFF

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

*Noise within***MISTRESS PAGE**

Alas, what noise?

MISTRESS FORD

Heaven forgive our sins

FALSTAFF

What should this be?

MISTRESS PAGE

Away, away!

They run off

Shakescleare Translation

*FALSTAFF enters disguised as Herne the Hunter.***FALSTAFF**

The Windsor bell has tolled midnight; it's almost time. Now, may the lustful gods help me! Remember, Jove ¹, how you turned yourself into a bull to pursue Europa; you acquired horns because of love. Oh, powerful love! In some ways, it makes a beast into a man, and in some ways, it makes a man into a beast. Jove, you also turned yourself into a swan because you loved Leda. Oh, all-powerful Love! How close Jove came to looking like a goose ²! He first committed the fault when he had transformed himself into a beast. Oh Jove, what a beastly ³ fault! And then he committed the same fault again when he had transformed himself into a fowl: think about it, Jove, a foul fault! If the gods themselves are full of sexual desire, what can poor humans do? As for me, I'm here in Windsor disguised as a stag, and I think I must be the fattest one in the forest. Let me have a cool time for mating, Jove, or who can blame me if I sweat away all my fat? Who comes here? my doe ⁴?

*MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE enter.***MISTRESS FORD**

Sir John! Are you there, my deer ⁵? My male deer?

FALSTAFF

My doe with the short black tail! Let the sky rain potatoes ⁶, let it thunder so it sounds like the song "Green Sleeves," let it hail sweetmeats ⁷ and snow candied roots ⁸, let there be storms of sexual arousal, I'll take shelter [*Clasping MISTRESS FORD*] here.

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page is here with me, sweetheart.

FALSTAFF

Cut me into pieces like a stolen buck, and each person can take a leg. I'll keep my sides for myself, I'll use my shoulders to defend myself, and I'll give my horns to your husbands. Do I look like a hunter, ha? Do I talk like Herne the hunter? Why, now, Cupid must have a conscience; he's finally making up for the trouble he's caused. Since I'm a genuine wood-spirit, I welcome you to the woods!

*Noise from offstage.***MISTRESS PAGE**

Oh no, what was that noise?

MISTRESS FORD

Heaven forgive us for what we've done wrong.

FALSTAFF

What could this be?

MISTRESS PAGE

Let's go, let's go!

MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE run away.

¹ Jove was the ancient Roman king of the gods. He disguised himself as a bull and wooed the human woman Europa. He also turned himself into a swan to seduce Leda.

² Jove went to extremes to satisfy his sexual desire, ending up looking foolish (like a "silly goose").

³ Falstaff puns here on "beast" (animal) and "beastly" (horrible); and on "fowl" (bird) and "foul" (awful).

⁴ Throughout the scene, Falstaff and the wives jokingly refer to each as deer. A doe is a female deer.

⁵ Mistress Ford puns on "deer" and "deer."

⁶ Potatoes were considered an aphrodisiac.

⁷ "Kissing-comfits," or sweetmeats, were made of preserved fruit, used to sweeten the breath.

⁸ Eringoes were candied roots of the sea-holly plant, considered an aphrodisiac.

FALSTAFF

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

Enter SIR HUGH EVANS, disguised as before; PISTOL, as Hobgoblin; MISTRESS QUICKLY, ANNE PAGE, and others, as Fairies, with tapers

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

PISTOL

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

FALSTAFF

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

50

Lies down upon his face

SIR HUGH EVANS

Where's Bede? 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:
55 But those as sleep and think not on their sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

About, about;
Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out:
60 Strew good luck, ouphes, 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
70 With juice of balm and every precious flower:
Each fair instalment, coat, and several crest,
With loyal blazon, evermore be blest!
And nightly, meadow-fairies, look you sing,
Like to the Garter's compass, in a ring:
The expresseure 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 emerald tufts, flowers purple, blue and white;
Let sapphire, pearl and rich embroidery,
75 Buckled below fair knighthood's bending knee:
Fairies use flowers for their character.
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 EVANS

80 Pray you, lock hand in hand; yourselves in order set
And twenty glow-worms shall our lanterns be,
To guide our measure round about the tree.
But, stay; I smell a man of middle-earth.

FALSTAFF

I think the devil won't let me damn myself by sinning, in case the fat on my body caused hell to catch fire ⁹. Otherwise, he'd never interfere with my plans so much.

SIR HUGH EVANS enters, disguised as a fairy; PISTOL enters, disguised as Hobgoblin; MISTRESS QUICKLY, ANNE PAGE, and others enter, disguised as fairies with candles.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Fairies, dressed in black, grey, green, and white, you moonlight dancers and spirits of night, you orphans ¹⁰ controlled by destiny, attend to your tasks and your jobs. Crier Hobgoblin, sound the call ¹¹ of the fairies.

PISTOL

Elves, listen for your names. Be quiet, you little things. Cricket, leap to the fireplaces of Windsor: wherever you find unraked ¹² fires or unswept hearths, pinch the maids there until they are blue as blueberries. Our radiant queen hates lazy maids and neglect.

FALSTAFF

These are fairies--whoever speaks to them dies. I'll close my eyes and lie down and hide. No human must look at them.

FALSTAFF lies down on his face.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Where's Bede? *[A boy steps forward]* Go, and when you find a maid who says her prayers three times before she goes to bed. Stimulate her imagination so that she sleeps as soundly as an innocent baby. But when you find maids that go to sleep without praying and reflecting on their sins, pinch them on their arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides, and shins.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Get to work, get to work. Elves, go through Windsor Castle ¹³, inside and outside. Sprinkle good luck, elves, in every royal room so that the castle will stand until the end of time in a condition that is fitting for the dignity of the place, so it will be worthy of the owner, and the owner will be worthy of it. Clean the various ceremonial pews in Windsor Chapel ¹⁴ with ointment and cleansing flowers. Let each lovely seat, coat of arms, each crest, and all the banners of loyalty ¹⁵ be forever blessed! And, meadow-fairies, be sure to sing each night, in a ring resembling the Garter's ¹⁶ circle. Create a green image more fresh and fertile than the field itself. And write "Let evil things happen to the person who thinks evil things ¹⁷," using emerald tufts and purple, blue, and white flowers. Let there be a garter made of sapphire, pearl, and detailed embroidery buckled below the knee of each worthy, loyal ¹⁸ knight. Fairies use flowers to write their messages. Go away, scatter--but don't forget that at one o'clock, we'll do our usual dance around the oak of Herne the hunter.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Please, take hands, line up in order, and we'll use twenty glow-worms for our lanterns to guide our dances around the tree. But wait, I smell a mortal man.

⁹ According to strictly interpreted Christian beliefs, committing a sexual sin (like adultery) could result in the soul's damnation to hell, which was envisioned as an eternal fire.

¹⁰ Fairies were imagined not to have parents.

¹¹ "Oye" is the call made by the town crier to attract the public's attention.

¹² To rake a fire is spread out the coals or logs evenly.

¹³ Windsor Castle was one of the homes of the English monarchs.

¹⁴ The "chairs of order" in the original text were stalls (similar to pews) in Windsor Chapel, assigned to members of the Order of the Garter.

¹⁵ In the original text, "loyal blazon" refers to banners given by aristocratic families to the monarch to represent their loyalty.

¹⁶ A garter is a band that is worn around the leg and has a circular shape (referred to in the original text as a "compass").

¹⁷ This is a translation of "Honi soit qui mal y pense," the motto of the Order of the Garter.

¹⁸ A knight would kneel, or bend his knee, to signify his loyalty to the monarch.

FALSTAFF

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

PISTOL

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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,
90 It is the flesh of a corrupted heart.

PISTOL

A trial, come.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Come, will this wood take fire?

They burn him with their tapers

FALSTAFF

Oh, Oh, Oh!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

95 Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!
About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme;
And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.
[SONG]
Fie on sinful fantasy!
100 *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.
105 *Pinch him, fairies, mutually;*
Pinch him for his villany;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him about,
Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

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

Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, and MISTRESS FORD

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

115 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
120 paid to Master Brook; his horses are arrested for
it, Master Brook.

FALSTAFF

God protect me from that Welsh fairy so he doesn't turn me into a piece of cheese!

PISTOL

You disgusting worm, you were destined for evil things since you were born.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Touch his finger with fire as a test. If he's chaste, the flame will recede and it won't hurt him. But if he jumps, it means he is sinful.

PISTOL

Test him, come on.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Let's see, will his finger catch fire?

They burn FALSTAFF with their candles.

FALSTAFF

Oh, oh, oh!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

He's corrupt, corrupt, and he has sinful desires! Surround him, fairies. Sing a scornful song, and as you dance, pinch him in time with the music.
[Singing]
Down with sinful ideas!
Down with lust and indulgence!
Lust is nothing better than a consuming passion,
Fueled ¹⁹ by unchaste desire,
That begins in the heart and that increases
More and more as thoughts stimulate it.
Pinch him, fairies, everyone;
Pinch him for his evil deeds;
Pinch him, and burn him, and turn him around,
Until the candles and starlight and moonlight are gone.

During the song they pinch FALSTAFF. DOCTOR CAIUS comes in one way and takes away with him a boy in green; SLENDER comes in another way and takes away with him a boy in white; and FENTON comes in and takes away ANNE PAGE with him. All the fairies run away. FALSTAFF takes off his buck's head and gets up.

PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, and MISTRESS FORD enter.

PAGE

No, don't try to escape. I think we've caught you in the act now. Is being Herne the hunter the only thing that will satisfy you?

MISTRESS PAGE

Please, come on, let's not keep the joke going any longer. So, good Sir John, what do you think of the Windsor wives now? Do you see these horns, husband? Don't these handsome horns ²⁰ belong more in the forest than in the town?

FORD

Now, sir, who's a cuckold now? Master Brook, Falstaff's a scoundrel, a cuckolded scoundrel. Here are his horns, Master Brook. And, Master Brook, Falstaff hasn't gotten anything ²¹ that belongs to Ford except Ford's laundry basket, stick, and twenty pounds in cash, which needs to be paid back to Master Brook; his horses have been seized as security for the money, Master Brook.

¹⁹ In the original text, the song metaphorizes lust as a "fire."

²⁰ In the following lines, the word "horns" refers both to the stag's horns that Falstaff wears, and also to a cuckold's horns.

²¹ Falstaff failed to get Ford's wife, but got ridicule. Disguised as Master Brook, Ford gave Falstaff twenty pounds, but now wants the money back.

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

125 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 EVANS

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

FORD

Well said, fairy Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

And leave your jealousies too, I pray you.

FORD

140 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 frize? 'Tis time I were choked with a piece of toasted cheese.

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

A puffed man?

PAGE

Old, cold, withered and of intolerable entrails?

FORD

And one that is as slanderous as Satan?

MISTRESS FORD

Sir John, we've had bad luck. We were never able to arrange a meeting. I'll never have you as my lover again, but I'll always think of you as my deer ²².

²² Mistress Ford puns on "deer" and "dear."

FALSTAFF

I begin to see that you've made an ass out of me.

FORD

Yes, and an ox too: we can see proof ²³ of both of those things.

²³ Once again, Ford refers to horns.

FALSTAFF

And these aren't fairies? I thought three or four times that they might not be fairies. And yet my sense of guilt, and the bewilderment of my senses, turned a foolish idea into a firm belief that they were actually fairies, in spite of all rhyme and reason. See how even a smart man can be made into laughingstock ²⁴ when he sets his mind to bad actions!

²⁴ A "Jack-a-Lent," as the original text reads, was a puppet that was set up for people to mock and throw stones at.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Sir John Falstaff, serve God and abandon your sexual desires, and then the fairies won't pinch you.

FORD

Well said, fairy Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

And I ask you to stop being jealous.

FORD

I will never doubt my wife again until you're able to woo her in correct English. ²⁵

²⁵ Ford pokes fun at Sir Hugh's faulty English to say that he will never doubt his wife again.

FALSTAFF

Have I ruined my brain so that I can't even thwart plots as overblown as this one? Have I been fooled by a Welsh goat? Will I wear a woolen fool's cap ²⁶? I ought to choke on a piece of toasted cheese.

²⁶ The woolen fool's hat and the toasted cheese are both associated with Wales.

SIR HUGH EVANS

This isn't the way to be better. Your belly is all butter.

FALSTAFF

"This" and "butter!" ²⁷ To think that I should live to be mocked by someone who speaks such terrible English! This is enough to put an end to all lust and late-night sexual encounters throughout the country.

²⁷ Falstaff imitates and mocks Sir Hugh's accent here.

MISTRESS PAGE

Why Sir John, even if we were willing to completely ruin our virtue and damn ²⁸ ourselves without a second thought, did you think that even the devil could have made us choose you as our lover?

²⁸ Mistress Page refers to Falstaff's proposed sexual affair, which she claims would have damned them if they had accepted it.

FORD

What, a giant sausage? A bag of flax? ²⁹

²⁹ Flax is a plant whose fibers are used to spin linen.

MISTRESS PAGE

A fat, vain man?

PAGE

Old, cold, wrinkled, and with gross guts?

FORD

And who lies like the devil?

PAGE

160 And as poor as Job?

FORD

And as wicked as his wife?

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

FALSTAFF

165 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

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

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

180

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

185 Of what, son?

SLENDER

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

PAGE

Upon my life, then, you took the wrong.

SLENDER

195 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

PAGE

And who is as poor as Job? ³⁰

FORD

And who is as wicked as his wife?

SIR HUGH EVANS

And who enjoys illicit sex, and taverns, and wine, and drinking and swearing and glaring, and raving and fighting, and petty fights and chattering ³¹?

FALSTAFF

Well, I'm your object of mockery. You have an advantage over me. I'm defeated, I can't offer any comebacks to this Welshman's taunts. I've been unbelievably foolish ³². Say whatever you like about me.

FORD

Well, sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to a certain Master Brook, whom you've cheated out of money and for whom you were going to arrange a sexual affair. Beyond what you've already suffered, I think it will be a great hardship to you to repay that money.

PAGE

Still, be cheerful, knight. You'll have a hot restorative drink at my house tonight, and when we get there, you can laugh at my wife, who's laughing at you right now. You can tell her that Master Slender has married her daughter.

MISTRESS PAGE

[To herself] Wise men wouldn't be so sure about that. As sure as Anne Page is my daughter, she's Doctor Caius' wife by now.

SLENDER enters.

SLENDER

Hello there! Hey, father Page!

PAGE

Son, how are you? How are you, son? Have you settled everything?

SLENDER

Settled! I'll let the highest-ranking person in Gloucester know about it. I'd rather be hanged than keep quiet.

PAGE

Know about what, son?

SLENDER

I went over to Eton to marry Mistress Anne Page, and she turned out to be a big clumsy boy. If we hadn't been in the church, I would have hit him, or he would have hit me. I was sure that it was Anne Page! And it turned out to be a stableboy.

PAGE

I swear on my life, then, you took the wrong person.

SLENDER

Do you really need to tell me that? I think I did take the wrong person when I mistook a boy for a girl. If I had gotten

³⁰ In the Old Testament, Job loses all his property when the devil sets out to destroy him. The devil tells lies about Job to God. Job's wife is considered wicked because she urges Job to curse God for the loss.

³¹ "Pribbles and prabbles," in the original text, are Sir Hugh's Welsh for "quibbles and brabbles," or petty fights and chattering.

³² A plummet is a lead weight used to measure the depth of a body of water; Falstaff indicates that the depths of his ignorance are deeper than ignorance itself.

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

200 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 postmaster'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

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, did you take her in green?

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Exit

FORD

This is strange. Who hath got the right Anne?

PAGE

My heart misgives me: here comes Master Fenton.

Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE

PAGE

215 How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE

Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

220 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,
225 Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed;
And this deceit loses the name of craft,
Of disobedience, or unduteous title,
Since therein she doth evitate and shun
230 A thousand irreligious cursed hours,
Which forced marriage would have brought upon her.

married to him, I wouldn't have slept with him, even though he was wearing women's clothing.

PAGE

Why, this is because of your own foolishness. Didn't I tell you how to recognize my daughter by her clothes?

SLENDER

I went up to the person in white, and said "mum," and she said "budget," just like Anne and I had arranged to do. And still, it wasn't Anne, it was a stableboy.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good George, don't be angry. I knew about your plan. I dressed my daughter in green, and, in fact, she's with the doctor at the deanery now, and will marry him there.

DOCTOR CAIUS enters.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Where is Mistress Page? By God, I've been cheated. I've married a boy, a boy. A peasant, by God, a boy. It's not Anne Page. By God, I'm cheated.

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, didn't you take the person wearing green?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Yes, by God, and it was a boy. By God, I'll make enough noise to wake up all of Windsor.

DOCTOR CAIUS exits.

FORD

This is strange. Who got the right Anne?

PAGE

I'm worried. Here comes Master Fenton.

FENTON and ANNE PAGE enter.

PAGE

Hello there, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE

Forgive me, good father! My good mother, forgive me!

PAGE

Now, young lady, how did it happen that you didn't go with Master Slender?

MISTRESS PAGE

Why didn't you go with Master Doctor, young lady?

FENTON

You're confusing her. Listen to what really happened. You would have forced her, in the most shameful way, into a marriage where there was no equality of love between the partners. The truth is that she and I, who have been engaged a long time, are now joined together so firmly that nothing can separate us. The sin she committed is a holy one ³³. And our deception doesn't count as an evil plot, as disobedience, or as lack of dutifulness, since by deceiving you, she avoided the thousand godless ³⁴, cursed hours that a forced marriage would have resulted in.

³³ Anne's "offense" or "sin" was disobeying her parents by marrying Fenton. But this action is also holy because her marriage to Fenton is a sacrament (an official act of the Church).

³⁴ Anne's marriage to another man would not have been godless because she would not have consented to it. For the sacrament of marriage to be holy, both partners must consent.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

235 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 eschew'd must be embraced.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS PAGE

240 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

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

Exeunt

FORD

Don't be bewildered; there's nothing you can do about it.
When it comes to love, heaven is in charge of what
happens. You can use money to get land, but accident and
chance determine who gets a wife.

FALSTAFF

You were trying to single me out ³⁵ to make fun of me, and
I'm glad that you can't do that now.

³⁵ *The townspeople cannot laugh only at Falstaff, since they must know also laugh at the Pages for being tricked.*

PAGE

Well, what can we do? Fenton, may God give you joy! If we
can't avoid something, we must embrace it.

FALSTAFF

When people go out hunting ³⁶ at night, you can't control
what happens.

³⁶ *Falstaff refers to hunting for sexual partners (described as "deer" in the original).*

MISTRESS PAGE

Well, I won't complain any further. Master Fenton, may God
give you many, many happy days! Good husband, let's all
go home and laugh about these jokes around a big fire, Sir
John and everyone.

FORD

Let's do that. Sir John, you'll end up keeping the promise
that you made to Master Brook, because tonight he will, in
fact, sleep with Mistress Ford.

They all exit.

How to Cite

To cite this Shakescleare translation:

MLA

Devlin, Maria. "The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Shakescleare Translation." LitCharts. LitCharts LLC, 19 May 2017. Web. 14 Sep 2017.

Chicago Manual

Devlin, Maria. "The Merry Wives of Windsor: A Shakescleare Translation." LitCharts LLC, May 19, 2017. Retrieved September 14, 2017. <http://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merry-wives-of-windsor>.