

The Merry Wives of Windsor

20 + Characters

Sir John Falstaff - a very fat rogue.

Master Fenton - a young, good-looking gentleman.

Justice Robert Shallow - an old and respectable man.

Master Frank Ford - a middle-aged, middle-class gentleman.

Master George Page - a wealthy gentleman.

William Page - the young son of Master George Page and Mistress Margaret.

Sir Hugh Evans - a Welsh parson.

Doctor Caius - a French physician.

Host of the Garter Inn - an innkeeper.

Bardolph - one of Falstaff's followers.

Pistol - one of Falstaff's followers.

Nym - one of Falstaff's followers.

Robin - Falstaff's page.

Peter Simple - Slender's servant.

John Rugby - Dr. Caius's servant.

Mistress Alice Ford - a middle-aged lady of Windsor.

Mistress Margaret Page - a middle-aged lady of.

Anne Page - the daughter of Master George Page and Mistress Margaret.

Mistress Quickly - Dr. Caius's housekeeper.

Master Abraham Slender - Justice Shallow's nephew.

Servants and children

ACT 1

SCENE I. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter MASTER OF CEREMONIES, 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 followers.

Host

Discard, let them wag; trot, trot.

Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and EVANS

FALSTAFF

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

SHALLOW

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

FALSTAFF

But not kissed your keeper's daughter!

SHALLOW

Tut, a pin! this shall be answered.

FALSTAFF

I will answer it straight: I have done all this: this is now answered.

EVANS

Peace, I pray you!

FALSTAFF

Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

I must cony-catch; I must shift.

PISTOL

Young ravens must have food.

FALSTAFF

Which of you know Ford of this town?

NYM

He is of substance good.

FALSTAFF

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

PISTOL

Two yards, and more.

FALSTAFF

No quips now, Pistol! Indeed, I am in the waist two yards about; but I am now about no waste; I am about thrift.

Briefly, I do mean to woo Ford's wife! Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels.

MYM

As many devils entertain!

BARDOLPH

'To her, boy,' say I.

FALSTAFF

I have writ me here a letter to her: and here another to Page's wife, she bears the purse too; Ah, I will trade to them both.

Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to Mistress Ford: we will thrive, we will thrive.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The dinner attends you. Come gentles, come!

SCENE II. A room in DOCTOR CAIUS' house.

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY, SIMPLE, and RUGBY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

What, Rugby! Go to the casement and see if you see my master, Doctor Caius, coming.

RUGBY

I'll go watch.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Go; and we'll have a posset.

Exit RUGBY

Peter Simple, you say your name is?

SIMPLE

Ay.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

And Master Slender's your master?

SIMPLE

Ay, forsooth.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

Re-enter RUGBY

RUGBY

Out, alas! here comes my master.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

Shuts SIMPLE in the closet.

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS

DOCTOR CAIUS

Pray you, go and vetch me in my closet un boitier vert,

a green-a box.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Ay, forsooth; I'll fetch it you.

Aside

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Is it this, sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

What, Rugby! Rugby!

RUGBY

Here.sir!

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

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

Rugby, my rapier!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Good master, be content.

The young man is an honest man.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Dere is no honest man dat shall come in my closet.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

He came of an errand to me from Parson Hugh.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Tarry you a little-a while.

Writes

MISTRESS QUICKLY

[Aside to SIMPLE] Have no words of it,--my master himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page. I know her mind,--that's neither here nor there.

DOCTOR CAIUS

You jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh; it is a shallenge: I will cut his troat in dee park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest to meddle or make. You may be gone; By gar, I will cut all his two stones.

Exit SIMPLE

DOCTOR CAIUS

It is no matter: By gar, I will myself have Anne Page.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well!

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Exeunt DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I know Anne's mind for that: never a woman

can do more than I do with her, I thank heaven.

FENTON

[Within] Who's within there? ho!

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Who's there? Come near, I pray you.

Enter FENTON

FENTON

How now, good woman?

What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

In truth, sir, and she is pretty, and honest, and gentle.

FENTON

Shall I do any good, thinkest thou?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Troth, sir, all is in his hands above: but notwithstanding, Master Fenton, she loves you.

--well, go to.

FENTON

Well, I shall see her to-day.

Well, farewell; I am in great haste now.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Farewell to your worship.

Exit FENTON

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

Exit

ACT II

SCENE I. Before PAGE'S house.

Enter MISTRESS PAGE, with a letter

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Let me see.

Reads

'Ask me no reason why I love you; for though
Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him
not for his counsellor. Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page,--at
the least, if the love of soldier can suffice,--
that I love thee. I will not say, pity me; 'tis
not a soldier-like phrase: but I say, love me. By me,
Thine own true knight,
By day or night,
Or any kind of light,
With all his might
For thee to fight, JOHN FALSTAFF'
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?
How shall I be revenged on him? for revenged I will be,
as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

Enter MISTRESS FORD

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

O Mistress Page, give me some counsel!

MISTRESS PAGE

What's the matter, woman?

What is it?

MISTRESS FORD

We burn daylight: here, read, read;

I shall think the worse of fat

men, as long as I have an eye to make difference of
men's liking, Did you ever hear the like?

MISTRESS PAGE

Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and
Ford differs!

Here's the twin-brother of thy letter.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Nay, I know not...

Let's be revenged on him!

MISTRESS FORD

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

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.

Let's consult together against this greasy knight.

Come hither.

They retire

Enter FORD with PISTOL, and PAGE with NYM

PAGE

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?

Will you go, Mistress Page?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Aside to MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS PAGE

You are come to see my daughter Anne?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

*Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and MISTRESS
QUICKLY*

Enter Host

Host

How now, bully-rook! thou'rt a gentleman.

Enter SHALLOW

SHALLOW

I follow, mine host, I follow. Master Page, will you go with us? we have sport in hand.

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

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.

They converse apart

Host

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

FORD

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

Host

My hand, bully; thou shalt have egress and regress; --said I well?--and thy name shall be Brook. Will you go?

SHALLOW

Have with you, mine host.

PAGE

I have heard the Frenchman hath good skill in

his rapier.

Host

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

Exeunt Host, SHALLOW, and PAGE

FORD

Though Page be a secure fool, an stands so firmly
on his wife's frailty.

Well, I will look further into't: and I have a disguise
to sound Falstaff. If I find her honest, I lose not
my labour; if she be otherwise, 'tis labour well bestowed.

Exit

SCENE II. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and PISTOL

FALSTAFF

I will not lend thee a penny.

ROBIN

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

FALSTAFF

Let her approach.

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Give your worship good morrow.

FALSTAFF

Good morrow, good wife.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Not so, an't please your worship.

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

FALSTAFF

Well, Mistress Ford; what of her?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford; come, Mistress Ford,--

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Marry, this is the short and the long of it; you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Marry, she hath received your letter, and she gives you to notify that her husband will be absence from his house between ten and eleven.

FALSTAFF

Ten and eleven?

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Ay, forsooth.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Why, you say well. But I have another messenger to

your worship. Mistress Page hath her hearty commendations to you too: surely I think you have charms, la; yes, in truth.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

That were a jest indeed! they have not so little grace, I hope: that were a trick indeed!

FALSTAFF

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

Exeunt MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN

This news distracts me!

Enter BARDOLPH

BARDOLPH

Sir John, there's one Master Brook below would fain be acquainted with you.

FALSTAFF

Brook is his name?

BARDOLPH

Ay, sir.

FALSTAFF

Call him in.

Exit BARDOLPH

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

And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

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

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Well, sir.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

FORD

When I have told you that, I have told you all, Sir John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, generally allowed for your many war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.

FALSTAFF

O, sir!

FORD

Believe it, for you know it. There is money;

spend all I have; only in exchange lay an amiable siege to the honesty of Ford's wife: use your art of wooing; win her to consent to you: if any man may, you may as soon as any. 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

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

FALSTAFF

Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook; you shall want none. I shall be with her, I may tell you, by her own appointment; between ten and eleven; for at that time the jealous rascally knave her husband will be forth. Come you to me at night; you shall know how I speed.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not.

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Hang him, Master Brook, thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and cuckold. Come to me soon at night.

Exit

FORD

What a damned Epicurean rascal is this! My heart is

ready to crack with impatience.
See the hell of having a false woman!
God be praised for my jealousy!
Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!
Exit

SCENE III. A field near Windsor.

Enter DOCTOR CAIUS and RUGBY

DOCTOR CAIUS

Rugby!

RUGBY

Sir?

DOCTOR CAIUS

Vat is de clock?

RUGBY

'Tis past the hour, sir, that Sir Hugh promised to meet.
He is wise, sir; he knew your worship would kill
him, if he came.

Enter Host, SHALLOW, SLENDER, and PAGE

Host

Bless thee, bully doctor!

SHALLOW

Save you, Master Doctor Caius!

PAGE

Now, good master doctor!

SLENDER

Give you good morrow, sir.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

Host

To see thee fight. Is he dead?

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

I pray you, bear vitness 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

'Tis true, Master Shallow.

(aside)

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

Let him die: I will bring thee where Mistress Anne Page is, at a farm-house a-feasting; and thou shalt woo her.

DOCTOR CAIUS

By gar, me dank you for dat: by gar, I love you;

Host

Let us wag, then.

DOCTOR CAIUS

Come at my heels, Rugby.

Exeunt

ACT III

SCENE I. A field near Frogmore.

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

Marry, sir, every way; old Windsor way, and every way but the
town way.

SIR HUGH EVANS

I most feheemently desire you will also look that
way.

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!

Re-enter SIMPLE

SIMPLE

Yonder he is coming, this way, Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH EVANS

Heaven prosper the right!

Enter PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER

SHALLOW

How now, master Parson! Good morrow, good Sir Hugh.

SLENDER

[Aside] Ah, sweet Anne Page!

SHALLOW

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

Peace, I say, soul-curer and body-curer!

DOCTOR CAIUS

Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

Host

Peace, I say! hear mine host of the Garter.

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!

Come. Follow me, lads of peace; follow, follow, follow.

SHALLOW

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

SLENDER

[Aside] O sweet Anne Page!

SCENE II. A street.

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

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

Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Be sure of that,--two other husbands.

FORD

Where had you this pretty weather-cock?

MISTRESS PAGE

What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

ROBIN

Sir John Falstaff.

FORD

Sir John Falstaff!

MISTRESS PAGE

He, he; I can never hit on's name. Is your wife at

home indeed?

FORD

Indeed she is.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

Clock heard.

SCENE III. A room in FORD'S house.

Enter MISTRESS FORD and MISTRESS PAGE

Enter Servants with a Z garment rack

MISTRESS PAGE

Come, come, come.

MISTRESS FORD

Here, set it down.

MISTRESS PAGE

Give your men the charge; we must be brief.

MISTRESS FORD

Marry, as I told you before, be

ready here: and when I call you, come forth, and without any pause

or staggering take this, and trudge with it in all haste, and

empty it in the muddy ditch close by the Thames side.

Be gone, and come when you are called.

Exeunt Servants

MISTRESS PAGE

I'll go hide me.

MISTRESS FORD

Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exit

Enter FALSTAFF

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

O sweet Sir John!

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, I cannot cog, I cannot prate, Mistress Ford. I would make thee my lady.

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

Let the court of France show me such another. What made me love thee? let that persuade thee there's something extraordinary in thee. But I love thee; none but thee; and thou deservest it.

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

ROBIN

[Within] Mistress Ford, Mistress Ford! here's

Mistress Page at the door, looking wildly, and would needs speak with you presently.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF hides himself

Re-enter MISTRESS PAGE and ROBIN

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

Your husband's coming hither, woman, with all the officers in Windsor, to search for a gentleman that he says is here now: you are undone.

MISTRESS FORD

What shall I do? There is a gentleman my dear friend.

MISTRESS PAGE

For shame! Bethink you of some conveyance: in the house you cannot hide him. O, how have you deceived me! Look, here: if he be of any reasonable stature, he may creep in here.

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

[Coming forward] Let me see't, let me see't, O, let

me see't! I'll in, I'll in. Follow your friend's
counsel. I'll in.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FALSTAFF

I love thee. Help me away. Let me creep in here.

I'll never--

Gets into the basket; they cover him with foul linen

MISTRESS FORD

Re-enter Servants

Go take up these clothes here quickly.

Carry them to the laundress; quickly, come.

Enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

FORD

How now! whither bear you this?

Servant

To the laundress, forsooth.

FORD

Exeunt Servants with the basket

Gentlemen, I have dreamed to-night; I'll tell you my dream. Here,
here, here be my keys: ascend my chambers; search, seek, find out:

I'll warrant we'll unkennel the fox.

follow me, gentlemen.

Exit

SIR HUGH EVANS

This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies.

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

Nay, follow him, gentlemen.

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

Hang him, dishonest rascal!

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

I will lay a plot to try that; and we will yet have more tricks with Falstaff!

Re-enter FORD, PAGE, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

DOCTOR CAIUS

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

PAGE

Fie, fie, Master Ford! are you not ashamed? What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination?

FORD

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

Well, I promised you a dinner. Come, come, I pray you,

pardon me; Come, wife; come, Mistress Page. I pray you, pardon me; pray heartily, pardon me.

PAGE

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

FORD

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.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. A room in PAGE'S house.

Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE and WILLA FORD

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

He doth object I am too great of birth--,
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, 'tis the very riches of thyself
That now I aim at.

WILLA

Tis sweet, la!

ANNE PAGE

Gentle Master Fenton, Yet seek my father's love;
why, then,--hark you hither!

They converse apart

Enter SHALLOW, SLENDER, and MISTRESS QUICKLY

SHALLOW

Break their talk, Mistress Quickly: my kinsman shall
speak for himself. Be not dismayed.

SLENDER

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

ANNE PAGE

I come to him.

Aside to Willa

This is my father's choice.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

SHALLOW

She's coming; to her, coz.

SLENDER

Mistress Anne...

SHALLOW

Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you.

ANNE PAGE

Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

SHALLOW

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

ANNE PAGE

Now, Master Slender,--

SLENDER

Now, good Mistress Anne,--

ANNE PAGE

What is your will?

SLENDER

My will! 'od's heartlings, that's a pretty jest indeed! I ne'er made my will yet, I thank heaven.

ANNE PAGE

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

SLENDER

Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my uncle hath made motions: you may ask your father; here he comes.

Enter PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE

PAGE

Now, Master Slender: love him, daughter Anne.

Why, how now! what does Master Fenton here?

FENTON

Nay, Master Page, be not impatient.

MISTRESS PAGE

Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

PAGE

She is no match for you.

FENTON

Sir, will you hear me?

PAGE

No, good Master Fenton.

Come, Master Shallow; come, son Slender, in.

Exeunt PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Speak to Mistress Page.

FENTON

Good Mistress Page, for that I love your daughter
In such a righteous fashion as I do, let me have your good will.

ANNE PAGE

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

Good Master Fenton,

I will not be your friend nor enemy:

My daughter will I question how she loves you,
And as I find her, so am I affected.

Till then farewell, sir: she must needs go in;
Her father will be angry.

FENTON

Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE

MISTRESS QUICKLY

This is my doing.

FENTON

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Now heaven send thee good fortune!

Exit FENTON

A kind heart he hath: a woman would run through
fire and water for such a kind heart.

Well, I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from
my two mistresses: what a beast am I to slack it!

Exit

SCENE V. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and BARDOLPH

FALSTAFF

Bardolph, I say,--

BARDOLPH

Here, sir.

FALSTAFF

Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a
barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the
Thames? You may know by my size
that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; I had
been drowned, but that the shore was shelvy and
shallow,--a death that I abhor; for the water swells
a man; and what a thing should I have been when I
had been swelled!

BARDOLPH

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

FALSTAFF

Let me pour in some sack to the Thames water;
Call her in.

BARDOLPH

Come in, woman!

Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY

Exit BARDOLPH

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Alas the day! good heart, that was not her fault: Her husband goes this morning; she desires you once more to come to her between eight and nine: I must carry her word quickly: she'll make you amends, I warrant you.

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

I will tell her.

FALSTAFF

Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

MISTRESS QUICKLY

Peace be with you, sir.

Exit

FALSTAFF

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

Enter FORD

FORD

Bless you, sir!

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

And sped you, sir?

FALSTAFF

Very ill-favoredly, Master Brook.

FORD

How so, sir? Did she change her determination?

FALSTAFF

No, Master Brook; her husband, dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy, comes at me as we spoke the prologue of our comedy; and his companions, instigated by his distemper, 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

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

FORD

A buck-basket!

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

'Tis past eight already, sir.

FALSTAFF

Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall know how I speed. Adieu. You shall have her, Master Brook!

Exit

FORD

Hum! ha! is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford awake! awake, Master Ford! if I have horns to make one mad, let the proverb go with me: I'll be horn-mad.

Exit

ACT IV

SCENE I. A room in FORD'S house.

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS FORD

FALSTAFF

Mistress Ford, are you sure of your husband now?

MISTRESS FORD

Ay, sweet Sir John.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Step into the chamber, Sir John.

Exit FALSTAFF

Enter MISTRESS PAGE

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

Why, none but mine own people.

MISTRESS PAGE

Indeed!

MISTRESS FORD

No, certainly.

Aside to her

Speak louder.

MISTRESS PAGE

Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

MISTRESS FORD

Why?

MISTRESS PAGE

Why, woman, your husband is in his old luns again:
any madness I ever yet beheld seemed but
tameness, civility and patience, to this his

distemper he is in now: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

MISTRESS FORD

Why, does he talk of him?

MISTRESS PAGE

Of none but him; but I am glad
the knight is not here; now he shall see his own foolery.

MISTRESS FORD

I am undone! The knight is here.

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

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

Re-enter FALSTAFF

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

On my word, it will serve him; she's as big as he
is: Run up, Sir John.

Quick, quick!

Exit FALSTAFF

MISTRESS FORD

I would my husband would meet him in this shape: he cannot abide the old woman of Brentford.

But is my husband coming?

MISTRESS PAGE

Ah, in good sadness, is he; he'll be here presently: let's go dress him like the witch of Brentford.

Hang him, dishonest varlet!

We'll leave a proof, by that which we will do,

Wives may be merry, and yet honest too!

·
Enter FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR HUGH EVANS

SIR HUGH EVANS

Why, this is mad as a mad dog!

SHALLOW

Master Ford, this is not well, indeed.

FORD

So say I too, sir.

Re-enter MISTRESS FORD

Come hither, Mistress Ford; Mistress Ford the honest woman, the modest wife, the virtuous creature, that I suspect without cause, mistress, do I?

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

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

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

Old woman! what old woman's that?

MISTRESS FORD

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

FORD

Have I not forbid her my house? 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

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

FORD

I'll prat her.

Beating him

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

Exit FALSTAFF

FORD

Will you follow, gentlemen?

PAGE

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

Exeunt FORD, PAGE, SHALLOW, DOCTOR CAIUS, and SIR

HUGH EVANS

MISTRESS FORD

What think you? Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

MISTRESS PAGE

Yes, by all means!

Exeunt

SCENE II. A room in FORD'S house.

Enter PAGE, FORD, MISTRESS PAGE, MISTRESS FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS

SIR HUGH EVANS

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

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

Within a quarter of an hour.

FORD

Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt;
I rather will suspect the sun with cold
Than thee with wantonness:

PAGE

'Tis well, 'tis well; no more:
But let our plot go forward: let our wives
Yet once again, to make us public sport,

Appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow,
Where we may take him and disgrace him for it.

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,
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know
This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.

PAGE

But what of this?

MISTRESS FORD

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

PAGE

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

MISTRESS PAGE

That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:
Nan Page my daughter and my little son and three or four more
we'll dress like fairies, green and white.

MISTRESS FORD

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

Exeunt PAGE, FORD, and SIR HUGH EVANS

SCENE III. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FENTON and Host

Host

I will hear you, Master Fenton.

FENTON

From time to time I have acquainted you
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne Page;
Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,
I'll show you here at large. Hark, good mine host.
To-night at Herne's oak, just 'twixt twelve and one,
Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;
And here it rests, that you'll procure the vicar
To stay for me at church 'twixt twelve and one,
And, in the lawful name of marrying,
To give our hearts united ceremony.

Host

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

Exeunt

ACT V

SCENE I. A room in the Garter Inn.

Enter FALSTAFF and MISTRESS QUICKLY

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS QUICKLY

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

FALSTAFF

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

Enter FORD

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

FORD

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

FALSTAFF

I went to her, Master Brook, as you see, like a poor old man: but I came from her, Master Brook, like a poor old woman.

To-night I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand. Follow. Strange things in hand, Master Brook! Follow.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Another part of the Park.

Enter FALSTAFF disguised as Herne

FALSTAFF

The Windsor bell hath struck twelve;
O powerful love!

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!

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, and my horns I bequeath your husbands.
As I am a true spirit, welcome!

Noise within

MISTRESS PAGE

Alas, what noise?

MISTRESS FORD

Heaven forgive our sins

FALSTAFF

What should this be?

MISTRESS FORD MISTRESS PAGE

Away, away!

They run off

*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.

FALSTAFF

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

SIR HUGH EVANS

Go you, and where you find those as sleep and think not on their
sins,
Pinch them, arms, legs, backs, shoulders, sides and shins.

SHALLOW

But, stay; I smell a man of middle-earth.
They burn him with their tapers

FALSTAFF

Oh, Oh, Oh!

MISTRESS QUICKLY and FAIRIES

SONG.

*During this song they pinch FALSTAFF. FENTON comes and
steals away ANN PAGE. A noise 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

Nay, do not fly!

MISTRESS PAGE

Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?

MISTRESS FORD

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

FALSTAFF

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

FORD

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

PAGE

Yet be cheerful, knight: thou shalt eat a posset
to-night at my house;

My heart misgives me: here comes Master Fenton.

Enter FENTON and ANNE PAGE

How now, Master Fenton!

ANNE PAGE

Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!

FENTON

The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,
Are now so sure that nothing can dissolve us.
The offence is holy that she hath committed.

FORD

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

PAGE

Well, Fenton, heaven give thee joy!

FALSTAFF

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

MISTRESS PAGE

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

FORD

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

Exeunt