

**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**

In the county of Gloucester, justice of peace and  
5 '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 luces 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 <sup>1</sup>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 <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "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).

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

**SLENDER**

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

<sup>3</sup> A judge appointed by the Crown to hear minor criminal cases.

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

**SHALLOW**

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

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

<sup>6</sup> "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 <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> "Rato-lorum" is another mistake for the term "custos rotulorum."

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

<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>11</sup> "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.

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

**SHALLOW**

The luce is the fresh fish; the salt fish is an old  
20 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**

It is not meet the council hear a riot; there is no  
fear of Got in a riot: the council, look you, shall  
35 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 better that friends is the sword, and end it:  
and there is also another device in my brain, which  
peradventure prings goot disretions with it: there  
is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master Thomas  
Page, which is pretty virginity.

**SLENDER**

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

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

**SHALLOW**

The pike is a fresh-water fish. An old cod <sup>13</sup> lives in salt  
water.

**SLENDER**

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

**SHALLOW**

You might, if you get married <sup>14</sup>.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

He will definitely mar <sup>15</sup> 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 council <sup>16</sup> 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 mind <sup>17</sup>, which  
might perhaps be a sensible one. You know Anne Page,  
daughter of Master <sup>18</sup> 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 pounds <sup>19</sup> in cash, and gold and  
silver, on his death-bed—may God give him a joyful  
resurrection <sup>20</sup>—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 Abraham <sup>21</sup> and Mistress Anne Page.

accent—the source of many jokes  
throughout the play.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> Sir Hugh mistakes "marrying" for "marring" (ruining something).

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

<sup>17</sup> In the original text, Sir Hugh says "brain" for "brain," or mind.

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

<sup>19</sup> The pound is the British unit of currency.

<sup>20</sup> 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**

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**

What, hoa! Got pless your house here!

65

**PAGE**

[Within] Who's there?

*Enter PAGE*

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

Here is Got's blessing, 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**

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.

<sup>21</sup> 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<sup>22</sup>, Master Shallow.

<sup>22</sup> 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**

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<sup>23</sup> lodge.

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**SHALLOW**

Ha, what nonsense! You'll answer<sup>24</sup> for what you've done.

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

**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<sup>25</sup> knew about this.  
 People will laugh at you.

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

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

A few good words, Sir John, good words.

**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**

Ay, by these gloves, did he, or I would I might never come in mine own great chamber again else, of 140 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<sup>26</sup>. Slender, I hit you on the head. What is your complaint about me?

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

**SLENDER**

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

**BARDOLPH**

You thin<sup>27</sup> slice of cheese!

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

**SLENDER**

Well, it doesn't matter.

**PISTOL**

What's this, you devil<sup>28</sup>?

<sup>28</sup> Mephosotophilus 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.

**SLENDER**

I said, it doesn't matter.

**NYM**

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

<sup>29</sup> 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.

**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<sup>30</sup> of the Garter Inn.

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

**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<sup>31</sup>, new coins, and two old shillings, that cost me two shillings and two pennies each from Yead Miller, I swear by these gloves.

<sup>31</sup> 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**

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**

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: 165 if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

So Got udge me, that is a virtuous mind.

**FALSTAFF**

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

170

*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 <sup>32</sup> to a duel. Try to say no to me! Try to say no, you piece of scum, you lie!

<sup>32</sup> 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.

**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 <sup>33</sup> man?

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

**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. <sup>34</sup>

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

**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. <sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Bardolph's phrase can also mean "he misinterpreted what happened."

**SLENDER**

Yes, your language was incomprehensible <sup>36</sup> 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.

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

**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.

**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**

Wife, bid these gentlemen welcome. Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner: come, gentlemen, I hope 180 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**

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

**SHALLOW**

Nay, but understand me.

**SLENDER**

So I do, sir.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

Give ear to his motions, Master Slender: I will 200 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 shillings <sup>37</sup> to have my Book of Songs and Sonnets <sup>38</sup> with me.

<sup>37</sup> A shilling is a British coin.

<sup>38</sup> 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.

*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 Day <sup>39</sup>, fourteen days before Michaelmas?

<sup>39</sup> "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.

**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 reasonably <sup>40</sup>. If the proposal is reasonable, I'll be reasonable too.

<sup>40</sup> 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.

**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.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

205

**SHALLOW**

Ay, there's the point, sir.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

**SLENDER**

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

210

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

215

**SHALLOW**

Cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her?

**SLENDER**

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

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

220

**SHALLOW**

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

**SLENDER**

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

**SHALLOW**

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

225

**SLENDER**

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

230

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

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

235

**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?

<sup>41</sup> In the original text, Slender mistakes "decrease" for "increase."

**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.

<sup>42</sup> In the original text, Slender mistakes "contempt" for "content."

<sup>43</sup> Slender mixes up "dissolved" with "resolved" (as in "deciding to do something").

<sup>44</sup> Slender mistakenly uses the word "dissolutely" in the original text for "resolutely" (with determination).

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

**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!

**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 blessed 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**

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 veneyes 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? 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**

That's meat and drink to me, now. I have seen  
275 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, Ia!

*Exeunt*

**ANNE PAGE**

Yes, indeed, sir.

**SLENDER**

That's a perfectly ordinary thing for me. I have seen  
Sackerson <sup>49</sup> 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.

<sup>49</sup> Sackerson was a famous bear used for bear-baiting fights.

*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.*

## 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  
5 his wringer.

5

**SIMPLE**

Well, sir.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

Nay, it is better yet. Give her this letter; for it  
is a 'oman that altogether's acquaintance with  
Mistress Anne Page: and the letter is, to desire  
10 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**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Do so, good mine host.

**HOST**

I have spoke; let him follow.

*To BARDOLPH*

**HOST**

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

15

*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**

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

25

**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**

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.'

40

**PISTOL**

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

45

**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;<sup>3</sup> as a thief, he was like a bad singer, he didn't act at the right moment.

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

**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.<sup>4</sup>

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

**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,<sup>5</sup> and more.

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

**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,<sup>6</sup> and decided that they aren't honest.<sup>7</sup>

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

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

**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.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> An angel was a British coin. Pistol puns on the other meaning of angel as a benevolent 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  
oileades; 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  
60 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 pinnace 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  shone on a pile of manure.

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

**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  ! 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  , full of gold and  
wealth. I will be like a treasury officer to them, and they will  
be like bank accounts  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.

 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.

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

 **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."

**PISTOL**

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

 **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.

**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  do, you scoundrels. I'll only take care of  
myself and one well-dressed servant.

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

*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! 

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

**NYM**

I have a plan to get revenge on him.

**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**

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

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

*PISTOL and NYM exit.*

## 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.

### Shakescleare 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 master 1, 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 drink 3 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**

Does he not wear a great round beard, like a  
20 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**

Ay, forsooth: but he is as tall a man of his hands  
25 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**

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

*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**

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.  
45

**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*

6 Mistress Quickly may sing for as long as it takes for Doctor Caius to enter.

*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**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

What, John Rugby! John!

**RUGBY**

Here, sir!

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

You are John Rugby, and you are Jack Rugby. Come,  
60 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! laron!

*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 <sup>8</sup> man.  
Come on, get your sword, and follow me to court.

<sup>8</sup> "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 <sup>9</sup>. Let me tell you what  
really happened. He came here to deliver a message to me  
from Parson Hugh.

<sup>9</sup> "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**

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, baile me some paper. Tarry you a little-a while.

*Writes*

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**SIMPLE**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

*Exit SIMPLE*

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Alas, he speaks but for his friend.

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

Rugby, come to the court with me. By God, 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 10 for one person to do.

10 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, command 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 <sup>11</sup>, 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 <sup>12</sup> 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.

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

<sup>12</sup> "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,  
10 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?  
25 Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! What should I say to him? I was then frugal of my mirth: Heaven forgive me! Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting down of men. How shall I be revenged on him? for revenged I will be, as sure as his guts are made of puddings.

*Enter MISTRESS FORD***MISTRESS FORD**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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!

**Shakesclare 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 <sup>1</sup>, 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 <sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup> 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 <sup>4</sup> 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!

<sup>1</sup> The original text refers to "sack," a type of Spanish wine.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Flemish people were supposed to be heavy drinkers.

<sup>4</sup> Parliament is the legislative branch of the British government.

*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!

**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 trifles, 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**

60 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, 65 and lie under Mount Pelion. Well, I will find you twenty lascivious turtles ere one chaste man.

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**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 minute 5, I could have the status of a knight.

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.

**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?

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.

**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 before 7. He must print them, undoubtedly, because he must not care what he publishes 8, since he's willing to write these letters to us. I would rather be buried under a mountain 9 than accept his offer. I bet you I could find twenty unfaithful turtledoves 10 before I could find one man who could control his sexual appetite.

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.

**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 chastity 11. 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.

11 Chastity is sexual faithfulness.

fury.

#### MISTRESS FORD

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

#### MISTRESS PAGE

So will I if he come under my hatches, I'll never to sea again. Let's be revenged on him: let's appoint him a meeting; give him a show of comfort in his suit and lead him on with a fine-baited delay, 90 till he hath pawned his horses to mine host of the Garter.

#### MISTRESS FORD

Nay, I will consent to act any villany against him, that may not sully the chariness of our honesty. O, 95 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

He woos both high and low, both rich and poor, Both young and old, one with another, Ford; 110 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.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> 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<sup>13</sup>, and he'll be attacking you: oh, it's terrible to be called a cuckold!

<sup>13</sup> 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 have a sword and it shall bite upon my necessity. He loves your wife; there's the short and the long. My name is Corporal Nym; I speak and I avouch; 'tis true: my name is Nym and Falstaff loves your wife. Adieu. I love not the humour of bread and cheese, and there's the humour of it. Adieu.

130

*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 drawling, 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**

How now, Meg!

140

*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**

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

145

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

*Aside to MISTRESS FORD*

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

150

**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**

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

165

**FORD**

Were they his men?

**PAGE**

Marry, were they.

**FORD**

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

170

**FORD**

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

**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.<sup>18</sup> I can't feel as calm  
about it as you can.

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

**PAGE**

Look where my ranting host of the Garter comes:  
180 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**

How now, bully-rook! thou'rt a gentleman.  
185 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**

None, I protest: but I'll give you a pottle of  
burnt sack to give me recourse to him and tell him  
205 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!<sup>19</sup> ?

.<sup>19</sup> 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<sup>20</sup> to use?--and I'll say your name is Brook.  
Falstaff is a merry knight. Will you go with me, gentlemen?

.<sup>20</sup> 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**

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.

215

**HOST**

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

**PAGE**

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

220

*Exeunt Host, SHALLOW, and PAGE*

**FORD**

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

225

*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.

[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.

**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.*

## 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**

Not a penny. I have been content, sir, you should  
5 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  
10 good soldiers and tall fellows; and when Mistress  
Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I took't upon  
mine honour thou hadst it not.

**PISTOL**

Didst not thou share? hadst thou not fifteen pence?

**FALSTAFF**

Reason, you rogue, reason: thinkest thou I'll  
15 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  
20 baseness, it is as much as I can do to keep the  
terms of my honour precise: I, I, I myself  
sometimes, leaving the fear of God on the left hand

### 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.

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

**PISTOL**

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

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

**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

[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.

and hiding mine honour in my necessity, am fain to shuffle, to hedge and to lurch; and yet you, rogue,  
 25 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**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Well, on: Mistress Ford, you say,--

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Mistress Ford; come, Mistress Ford,--

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Ten and eleven?

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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**<sup>9</sup>. The best **courtier**<sup>10</sup> 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**<sup>11</sup>, and even better, gentleman in the royal bodyguard. But, I'm telling you, none of that matters to her.

**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.

**FALSTAFF**

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

**12** Mercury was the ancient Roman messenger god.

**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.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Blessing on your heart for't!

**FALSTAFF**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Why, I will.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

*Exeunt MISTRESS QUICKLY and ROBIN*

**FALSTAFF**

This news distracts me!

**PISTOL**

This punk is one of Cupid's carriers:  
Clap on more sails; pursue; up with your fights:  
Give fire: she is my prize, or ocean whelm them all!

*Exit*

**FALSTAFF**

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

*Enter BARDOLPH*

**BARDOLPH**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Brook is his name?

**BARDOLPH**

Ay, sir.

**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 <sup>13</sup>, chase her, get ready for battle, arm yourselves: may we lose everything if I don't catch her!

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

*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.

**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, 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**

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**

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  
220 there is shrewd construction made of her. Now, Sir  
John, here is the heart of my purpose: you are a  
gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable  
discourse, of great admittance, authentic in your  
place and person, generally allowed for your many  
war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.

**FALSTAFF**

O, sir!

**FORD**

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

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**

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 be looked against. Now, could I could come to her with any detection in my hand, my desires had instance and argument to commend themselves: I could drive her then from the ward of her purity, her reputation, her marriage-vow, and a thousand other her defences, which now are too too strongly embattled against me. What say you to't, Sir John?

**FALSTAFF**

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

**FORD**

O good sir!

**FALSTAFF**

I say you shall.

**FORD**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**FORD**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**FORD**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

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 <sup>14</sup> 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?

<sup>14</sup> 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.

**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 <sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> "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.

**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.

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 have thought this? See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; and I shall not only receive this villainous wrong, but stand under the adoption of abominable terms, and by him that does me this wrong. Terms! names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends: but Cuckold! Wittol!--Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will 295 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 think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect. God be praised for my jealousy! Eleven o'clock the hour. I will prevent this, detect my wife, be revenged on Falstaff, and laugh at Page. I will about it; better three hours too soon than a minute too late. Fie, fie, fie! cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!

*Exit*

*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! Amaimon <sup>16</sup> 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 Flemish <sup>17</sup> 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!

<sup>16</sup> Amaimon, Lucifer, and Barbason are names of devils.

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

*FORD exits.*

## 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 meet.

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

**RUGBY**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

### 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**

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 world; he  
is not show his face.

**HOST**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

**SHALLOW**

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

**PAGE**

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 <sup>1</sup>,  
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 <sup>2</sup> say?  
The doctor with his weak heart <sup>3</sup>? Ha! Is he dead, you  
fool? Is he dead?

<sup>1</sup> "Foin," and the terms following in the original text, are technical fencing terms.

<sup>2</sup> Aesculapius was the classical god of medicine; Galen was a famous ancient physician.

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

**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 <sup>4</sup>. You're a great warrior <sup>5</sup>,  
my man!

<sup>4</sup> "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).

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

**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 <sup>6</sup> now.

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

**SHALLOW**

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

45

**PAGE**

'Tis true, Master Shallow.

**SHALLOW**

It will be found so, Master Page. Master Doctor Caius, I am come to fetch you home. I am sworn of 50 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-vater! vat is dat?

**HOST**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

By gar, den, I have as mush mock-vater as de Englishman. Scurvy jack-dog priest! by gar, me vill 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**

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

70

*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.

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

**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.

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.

**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.

9 To "clapperclaw" means to maul or thrash.

**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

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

**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.

11 Frogmore is a village near Windsor.

*The HOST speaks aside to them so CAIUS cannot hear.*

**PAGE**

Is Sir Hugh there?

**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**

Let him die: sheathe thy impatience, throw cold water on thy choler: go about the fields with me through Frogmore: I will bring thee where Mistress Anne Page is, at a farm-house a-feasting; and thou shalt woo her. Cried 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 <sup>12</sup> your attempts to win Anne Page. Does that sound good?

<sup>12</sup> 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 <sup>1</sup>, and everywhere except back near the town.

<sup>1</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup> when I  
get a chance. Bless my soul!

<sup>2</sup> 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  
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.*

<sup>3</sup> 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.)* <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 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**

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.

55

**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. Vherefore 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  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 , 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**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

[Aside to DOCTOR CAIUS] Pray you let us not be laughing-stocks to other men's humours; I desire you in friendship, and I will one way or other make you amends.  
85

[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**

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

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

**SHALLOW**

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 vouting-stog. I desire you that we may be friends; and let us knog our prains together to be revenge on this same scall, scury 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 7, 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? 8? 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. 9 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.

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

9 "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.

### Shakesclare 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. 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 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.

**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**

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

**SLENDER**

I hope I have your good will, father Page.

**PAGE**

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

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

**HOST**

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

**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**

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

**FORD**

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

**SHALLOW**

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

*Exeunt SHALLOW, and SLENDER*

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

Go home, John Rugby; I come anon.

*Exit RUGBY*

**HOST**

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**

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 Poins;<sup>2</sup>  
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.

<sup>2</sup> Page refers to the badly-behaved prince, Hal, from Henry IV Part 1. Hal and Poins were Falstaff's companions, not Fenton's.

**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.*

## 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**

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 or staggering take this basket on your shoulders: that done, trudge with it in all haste, and carry it among the whitsters in Datchet-mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch close by the Thames side.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

You will do it?

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

*Exeunt Servants*

**MISTRESS PAGE**

Here comes little Robin.

*Enter ROBIN*

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**ROBIN**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**ROBIN**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

Do so. Go tell thy master I am alone.

*Exit ROBIN*

**MISTRESS FORD**

Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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 pumpion; 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**

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

50

**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. 7

7 Turtledoves were known for their fidelity; jays were known as chattering birds, representing flirtatiousness.

*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. 8

8 "Lady" was a formal title for the wife of a knight.

**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. 9

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.

**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 10, given your natural beauty. Come on, you can't deny it.

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.

**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 11. I can't, but I love you. No one but you, and you deserve it.

11 Bucklersbury was a street in London where fresh, fragrant medicinal plants, called "simples," were sold in the summer.

**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 12, which smells as terrible as the smoke from a lime-furnace. 13

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**

Nay, I must tell you, so you do; or else I could not  
80 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**

What's the matter? how now!

90

**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 absence: 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 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**

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 115 out of the house.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

For shame! never stand 'you had rather' and 'you had rather:' your husband's here at hand, bethink 120 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**

What, Sir John Falstaff! Are these your letters, 130 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**

Help to cover your master, boy. Call your men, 135 Mistress Ford. You dissembling knight!

**MISTRESS FORD**

What, John! Robert! John!

*Exit ROBIN*

*Re-enter Servants*

**MISTRESS FORD**

Go take up these clothes here quickly. Where's the cowl-staff? look, how you drumble! Carry them to 140 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 uncap.

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.

*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**

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

175

**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 <sup>15</sup>! 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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**

Nay, 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 <sup>16</sup>, so throwing him into the water will do him some good.

<sup>16</sup> 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**

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?

185

**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**

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

190

**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**

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!

200

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

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

205

**PAGE**

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

**FORD**

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

**SIR HUGH 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**

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.

215

**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?

**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 <sup>18</sup> together; I have a fine hawk for driving birds into the bush. Shall we do that?

<sup>18</sup> When birding, or hunting for small birds, a trained hawk chased the birds into bushes, where hunters could shoot them.

**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**

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

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

**ANNE PAGE**

May be he tells you true.

**FENTON**

No, heaven so speed me in my time to come!  
Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth  
Was the first motive that I wo'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.

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

**SLENDER**

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

**SHALLOW**

Be not dismayed.

**SLENDER**

No, she shall not dismay me: I care not for that,  
30 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**

This is my father's choice.  
35 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**

Ay, that I will, come cut and long-tail, under the  
50 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.

2 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**

Now, Master Slender,--

**SLENDER**

Now, good Mistress Anne,--

**ANNE PAGE**

What is your will?

**SLENDER**

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

**ANNE PAGE**

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

**SLENDER**

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

*Enter PAGE and MISTRESS PAGE*

**PAGE**

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

**FENTON**

Nay, Master Page, be not impatient.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

**PAGE**

She is no match for you.

**FENTON**

Sir, will you hear me?

**PAGE**

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

*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. 3

3 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 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! 4 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.

4 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.

**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**

Nay, 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.

**FENTON**

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

**ANNE PAGE**

Good mother, do not marry me to yond fool.

**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**

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

**FENTON**

Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

*Exeunt MISTRESS PAGE and ANNE PAGE*

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FENTON**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Now heaven send thee good fortune!

*Exit FENTON*

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

*Exit*

**FENTON**

Good Mistress Page, because I love your daughter with such  
honorable intentions , 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.

 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  over there.

 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 shelly 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 brawage.

*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.

1 "Buttered brains" may have been a term for a foolish person.

*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 2, my stomach is full of ford.

2 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**

Alas the day! good heart, that was not her fault:  
she does so take on with her men; they mistook their  
erection.

40

**FALSTAFF**

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

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

45

**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.

50

**FALSTAFF**

Do so. Between nine and ten, sayest thou?

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Eight and nine, sir.

**FALSTAFF**

Well, be gone: I will not miss her.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Peace be with you, sir.

55

*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.

65

**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.

. 3 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 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**

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

**FORD**

What, while you were there?

**FALSTAFF**

While I was there.

**FORD**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**FORD**

A buck-basket!

**FALSTAFF**

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

**FORD**

And how long lay you there?

**FALSTAFF**

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

**FORD**

In good sadness, I am sorry that for my sake you have suffer'd all this. My suit then is desperate; 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 <sup>4</sup>; next, in the container, I was bent over double like a sword <sup>5</sup>, with my top touching my bottom and my heels touching my head; and then, I was stuffed like a cork in a wine bottle 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 <sup>6</sup>, I was thrown into the Thames. Just as I was glowing hot, I was cooled off in the river like a horse-shoe <sup>7</sup>. 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?

<sup>4</sup> A bell-wether is a castrated ram.

<sup>5</sup> The term "bilbo" in the original text refers to a sword whose strength was tested by being bent.

<sup>6</sup> Dutch food was considered to be particularly greasy.

<sup>7</sup> 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 eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.

125

**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 130 crowned with your enjoying her. Adieu. You shall have her, Master Brook; Master Brook, you shall cuckold Ford.

130

*Exit***FORD**

Hum! Ha! Is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford awake! awake, Master Ford. 135 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: if I have horns to make one mad, let the proverb go 145 with me: I'll be horn-mad.

145

*Exit**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.

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).

*FORD exits.*

## 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

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.

*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.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Blessing of his heart!

**MISTRESS PAGE**

Sir Hugh, my husband says my son profits nothing in  
15 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 brain.

**WILLIAM PAGE**

Lapis.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

That is a good William. What is he, William, that  
35 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. 2

2 The two kinds of nouns are singular and plural.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Really, I thought there were three, because the expression  
is, "Od's nouns." 3

3 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."

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

Stop your chattering! What is "beautiful," William?

**WILLIAM PAGE**

Pulcher.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Polecats 4! I'm sure there are things more beautiful than  
polecats!

4 Mistress Quickly mistakes William's "pulcher" (the Latin word for "fair" or "beautiful") for "polecat," a smelly mammal.

**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. 5

5 William thinks that Sir Hugh is asking what a stone is, but he is actually asking the Latin word for stone.

**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 6  
like this: Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc.

6 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**

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**

You do ill to teach the child such words: he  
teaches him to hick and to hack, which they'll do  
60 fast enough of themselves, and to call 'horum': fie  
upon you!

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

Nominativo, hig, hag, hog. 7 Please, pay attention.  
Genitivo, hujus. Well, what is the article in the accusative  
case?

7 Sir Hugh's Welsh accent slightly  
distorts his Latin.

**WILLIAM PAGE**

Accusativo, hinc. 8

8 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 9 case,  
William?

9 "Focative" is Sir Hugh's  
pronunciation of "vocative". His  
accent gives the word an obscene  
suggestion.

**WILLIAM PAGE**

O 10--vocativo, O.

10 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. 11

11 "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 12 plural, William?

12 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 13 is disgraceful! Shame on her! Don't talk  
about her, child, if she's a whore.

13 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 14,  
which children learn fast enough on their own, and to say  
the word "horum." Shame on you!

14 "Hick" means "to hiccup," and  
"hack" means "to slash" (and may

65

**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 I would desires.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

Prithee, hold thy peace.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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

**WILLIAM PAGE**

Forsooth, I have forgot.

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

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*

## 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 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.

have a sexual sense as well as a violent one).

15 In Latin and other romance languages, nouns are gendered.

**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.

16 Sir Hugh may pronounce these words as "keys," "case," and "cods," slang terms for penis, vagina, and testicles.

**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.*

*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, 'Peer out, peer out!' that any madness I ever yet beheld seemed but tameness, civility and patience, to this his distemper he is in now: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

**MISTRESS FORD**

Why, does he talk of him?

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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 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 be 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**

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**

Where is it?

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**FALSTAFF**

I'll go out then.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

How might we disguise him?

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

*Exit FALSTAFF*

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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**

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

85

**MISTRESS FORD**

But is my husband coming?

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

90

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

95

*Exit*

**MISTRESS PAGE**

Hang him, dishonest varlet! we cannot misuse him enough. We'll leave a proof, by that which we will do, Wives may be merry, and yet honest too: We do not act that often jest and laugh; 'Tis old, but true, Still swine eat all the draf.

100

*Exit*

*Re-enter MISTRESS FORD with two Servants*

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

105

*Exit*

**FIRST SERVANT**

Come, come, take it up.

**SECOND SERVANT**

Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

**FIRST SERVANT**

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

110

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

**FORD**

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

115

**MISTRESS PAGE**

I hope that the knight encounters your husband's cudgel,<sup>3</sup> and I hope that your husband uses it forcefully!

<sup>3</sup> 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 honest<sup>4</sup> 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."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Merry" can mean talkative, cheerful, fun-loving, ready to joke, flirtatious. "Honest" means truthful but, more particularly, chaste.

<sup>5</sup> 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 pandering<sup>6</sup> 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!

<sup>6</sup> 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**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**FORD**

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

*Pulling clothes out of the basket*

**PAGE**

This passes!

**MISTRESS FORD**

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**

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.

145 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 jealousy.

**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**

Help to search my house this one time. If I find  
not what I seek, show no colour for my extremity; let  
155 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**

A witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! Have I not  
165 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**

Out of my door, you witch, you hag, you baggage, you  
polecat, you runyon! out, out! I'll conjure you,  
180 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." 7 Bear with me one more time,  
search the house with me one more time.

7 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 8, 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!

8 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 9 her.

9 "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**

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**

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**

Should we tell our husbands how we have served him?

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**SIR HUGH EVANS**

I swear, I think the woman is really a witch. I don't like it when women have large beards.<sup>10</sup> I see a large beard under his<sup>11</sup> muffler.

<sup>10</sup> As in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, witches were represented as having beards.

<sup>11</sup> Sir Hugh means "her," but may be confused by the beard. He does not realize Falstaff's true identity.

**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<sup>12</sup>, hallow it out, and hang it over the altar<sup>13</sup>. It has done excellent work.

<sup>12</sup> Apparently Ford beat Falstaff with his cudgel.

<sup>13</sup> Sacred religious relics, like clothes belonging to a saint, would be honored by being placed near an altar.

**MISTRESS FORD**

What do you think? Since we are women<sup>14</sup> and we have a clear conscience, is it permissible for us to take any more revenge on him?

<sup>14</sup> The wives remark more than once that they take revenge on Falstaff on behalf of all women.

**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<sup>15</sup> us again.

<sup>15</sup> 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).

**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<sup>16</sup> then, let's come up with an idea. I don't want to let our momentum die down.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

*Exeunt*

*MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD exit.*

## 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**

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

**BARDOLPH**

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

**HOST**

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

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.

1 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 ragg'd horns;  
And there he blasts the tree and takes the cattle  
And makes milch-kine yield blood and shakes a chain  
In a most hideous and dreadful manner:  
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, ouches 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](#) <sup>2</sup>, 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.

<sup>2</sup> Herne the hunter is a spirit or ghost thought to haunt Windsor Forest.

**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. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> In other versions of the text, Mistress Ford's next sentence is "Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head."

**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 <sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Fairies were thought to dance in the woods late at night, and to pinch humans who bothered them.

**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.

**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**

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

**PAGE**

That silk will I go buy.

*Aside*

**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 knaverys.

*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 [5].

*[To MISTRESS PAGE and MISTRESS FORD] Go send a message to Falstaff right away.*

[5] Eton was a town across the river from Windsor.

**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.*

## Act 4, Scene 5

### Shakespeare

*Enter Host and SIMPLE*

**HOST**

What wouldest 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.

### Shakescleare 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**

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

**FALSTAFF**

[Above] How now, mine host!

**HOST**

Here's a Bohemian-Tartar 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**

Pray you, sir, was't not the wise woman of 25 Brentford?

**FALSTAFF**

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

**SIMPLE**

My master, sir, Master Slender, sent to her, seeing her go through the streets, to know, sir, whether 30 one Nym, sir, that beguiled him of a chain, had the chain or no.

**FALSTAFF**

I speake with the old woman about it.

**SIMPLE**

And what says she, I pray, sir?

**FALSTAFF**

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

**SIMPLE**

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

**FALSTAFF**

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**

Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress Anne  
45 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**

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  
60 my learning.

*Enter BARDOLPH*

**BARDOLPH**

Out, alas, sir! cozenage, mere cozenage!

**HOST**

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

**BARDOLPH**

Run away with the cozeners; for so soon as I came  
beyond Eton, they threw me off from behind one of  
65 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 5 them, sir.

5 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 6 for  
learning.

6 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. 7

7 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**

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 <sup>75</sup> 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 vouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well.

*Exit*

*Enter DOCTOR CAIUS*

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

<sup>80</sup> Vere is mine host de Jartere?

**HOST**

Here, master doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

**DOCTOR CAIUS**

I cannot tell vat is dat: but it is tell-a me dat you make grand preparation for a duke de Jamany: by <sup>85</sup> 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**

<sup>90</sup> 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 <sup>95</sup> repent.

*Enter MISTRESS QUICKLY*

**FALSTAFF**

Now, whence come you?

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

From the two parties, forsooth.

**FALSTAFF**

The devil take one party and his dam the other! 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. <sup>105</sup>

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

And have not they suffered? Yes, I warrant; speciously one of them; Mistress Ford, good heart, is beaten black and blue, that you cannot see a white spot about her. <sup>110</sup>

**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 <sup>8</sup>. 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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 <sup>9</sup>, 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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 <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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 Brentford: but that my admirable dexterity of wit, my counterfeiting the action of an old woman, delivered me, the knave constable had set me i' the stocks, i' the common stocks, for a witch.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

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

**FALSTAFF**

Come up into my chamber.

*Exeunt*

## 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,

**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.

 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.

**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.*

### 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**

Went you not to her yesterday, sir, as you told me  
15 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.

 Herne the Hunter was supposed  
to have horns and shake a chain (as  
Mistress Quickly describes in Act 4,  
Scene 4).

**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?

**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.

 *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).*

FALSTAFF and FORD exit.

## 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**

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

**SHALLOW**

That's good too; but what needs either your 'mum' or her 'budget?' the white will decipher her well enough. It hath struck ten o'clock.  
 10

**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

**Shakesclare 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.

 *Horns are a traditional attribute of the devil; Falstaff, of course, will also be wearing horns on this night.*

PAGE, SHALLOW, and SLENDER exit.

## 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.

**Shakesclare 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 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**

My husband will not rejoice so much at the abuse of Falstaff as he will chafe at the doctor's marrying 10 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**

They are all couched in a pit hard by Herne's oak, 15 with obscured lights; which, at the very instant of Falstaff's and our meeting, they will at once display to the night.

**MISTRESS FORD**

That cannot choose but amaze him.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

If he be not amazed, he will be mocked; if he be 20 amazed, he will every way be mocked.

**MISTRESS FORD**

We'll betray him finely.

**MISTRESS PAGE**

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

**MISTRESS FORD**

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

25

*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 bold, I pray you; follow me into the pit; and when I give the watch-'ords, do as I bid you: come, come; trib, trib.

*Exeunt*

### 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  
5 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  
10 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  
20 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  
25 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

30 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?

5 Mistress Ford puns on "dear" and "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.

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.

#### 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  
20 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 is 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.*

**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 sluttiness.

**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  
65 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:  
70 The expressure that it bears, green let it be,  
More fertile-fresh than all the field to see;  
And 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' write  
In 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 charactery.  
Away; disperse: but till 'tis one o'clock,  
Our dance of custom round about the oak  
Of Herne the hunter, let us not forget.

**SIR HUGH 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 <sup>9</sup>. Otherwise, he'd never interfere with my plans so much.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

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 <sup>10</sup> controlled by destiny, attend to your tasks and your jobs. Crier Hobgoblin, sound the call <sup>11</sup> of the fairies.

<sup>10</sup> Fairies were imagined not to have parents.

<sup>11</sup> "Oye" is the call made by the town crier to attract the public's attention.

**PISTOL**

Elves, listen for your names. Be quiet, you little things. Cricket, leap to the fireplaces of Windsor: wherever you find unraked <sup>12</sup> fires or unswept hearths, pinch the maids there until they are blue as blueberries. Our radiant queen hates lazy maids and neglect.

<sup>12</sup> To rake a fire is spread out the coals or logs evenly.

**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.

<sup>13</sup> Windsor Castle was one of the homes of the English monarchs.

**MISTRESS QUICKLY**

Get to work, get to work. Elves, go through Windsor Castle <sup>13</sup>, 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 <sup>14</sup> with ointment and cleansing flowers. Let each lovely seat, coat of arms, each crest, and all the banners of loyalty <sup>15</sup> be forever blessed! And, meadow-fairies, be sure to sing each night, in a ring resembling the Garter's <sup>16</sup> 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 <sup>17</sup>," 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 <sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> In the original text, "loyal blazon" refers to banners given by aristocratic families to the monarch to represent their loyalty.

<sup>16</sup> 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").

<sup>17</sup> This is a translation of "Honi soit qui mal y pense," the motto of the Order of the Garter.

<sup>18</sup> A knight would kneel, or bend his knee, to signify his loyalty to the monarch.

**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.

**FALSTAFF**

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

85

**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,  
It is the flesh of a corrupted heart.

90

**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**

Nay, do not fly; I think we have watch'd you now  
110 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  
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 <sup>19</sup> 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.*

. 19 In the original text, the song metaphorizes lust as a "fire."

*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 <sup>20</sup> belong more in the forest than in the  
town?

. 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.

**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 <sup>21</sup> 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.

. 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 Got, 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**

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.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> 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<sup>23</sup> of both of those things.

<sup>23</sup> 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<sup>24</sup> when he sets his mind to bad actions!

<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 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<sup>26</sup>? I ought to choke on a piece of toasted cheese.

<sup>26</sup> 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!"<sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> 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<sup>28</sup> ourselves without a second thought, did you think that even the devil could have made us choose you as our lover?

<sup>28</sup> 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?<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> 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 metheglins, 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**

Marry, sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to one 170 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**

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 swinged him, or he should have swinged me. If I did not think it had 190 been Anne Page, would I might never stir!--and 'tis a postmaster's boy.

**PAGE**

Upon my life, then, you took the wrong.

**SLENDER**

What need you tell me that? I think so, when I took a boy for a girl. If I had been married to him, for

195

**PAGE**

And who is as poor as Job?<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> 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.

**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?<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "Pribbles and prabbles," in the original text, are Sir Hugh's Welsh for "quibbles and brabbles," or petty fights and chattering.

**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.<sup>32</sup> Say whatever you like about me.

<sup>32</sup> 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.

**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's 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

all he was in woman's apparel, I would not have had him.

**PAGE**

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

**SLENDER**

I went to her in white, and cried 'mum,' and she cried 'budget,' as Anne and I had appointed; and yet it was not Anne, but a 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**

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**

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**

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**

Why went you not with master doctor, maid?

**FENTON**

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

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 <sup>33</sup>. 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 <sup>34</sup>, cursed hours that a forced marriage would have resulted in.

<sup>33</sup> 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).

<sup>34</sup> Anne's marriage to another man would 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 <sup>35</sup> to make fun of me, and  
I'm glad that you can't do that now.

<sup>35</sup> 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 <sup>36</sup> at night, you can't control  
what happens.

<sup>36</sup> 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.*

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