

# Falstaff

## Scene 1 (I.i)

*Curtains open on Windsor town. Music.*

*Justice Shallow is SR. Master Slender crosses from SL to join him.*

Shal. 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. The council shall hear it. Ha! o' my life, if I were young again, the sword should end it. Well, let us see honest Master Page. Is Falstaff there?

Slen. I will beat the door for Master Page. [Knocks] What, hoa! Got bless your house here!

Page. [offstage USR] Who's there?

*Enter Page USR*

Shal. Here is Got's blessing, and your friend, Justice Shallow; and here young Master Slender, that peradventures shall tell you a tale.

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

Shal. 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.

Page. Sir, I thank you.

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

Page. I am glad to see you, good Master Slender.

Shal. Is Sir John Falstaff here?

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

Shal. He hath wronged me, Master Page.

Page. Sir, he doth in some sort confess it.

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

Page. Here comes Sir John.

*Enter Sir John Falstaff, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol USL*

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

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

Fal. But not kissed your keeper's daughter?

Shal. Tut, this shall be answered.

Fal. I will answer it straight; I have done all this. That is now answered.

Shal. The council shall know this.

Fal. Slender, I broke your head: what matter have you against me?

Slen. Marry, sir, I have matter in my head against you; and against your cony-catching rascals, Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol.

Bard. You Banbury cheese!

Slen. Ay, it is no matter.

Pist. How now, Mephostophilus!

Slen. Ay, it is no matter.

Page. Peace, I pray you. I shall hear it and end it between them.

Fal. Pistol! Pistol, did you pick Master Slender's purse?

Slen. Ay, by these gloves, did he! Of seven groats in mill-sixpences, and two Edward shovel-boards, that cost me two shilling and two pence a-piece, by these gloves.

Fal. Is this true, Pistol?

Pist. Ha, Sir John and master mine, word of denial: froth and scum, thou liest!

Slen. {to Nym} By these gloves, then, 'twas he.

Nym. Be avised, sir, and pass good humours.

Slen. By this hat, then, he in the red face had it; [to Bard.] for though I cannot remember what I did when you made me drunk, yet I am not altogether an ass.

Fal. [to Bardolph] What say you, Will Scarlet and Little John?

Bard. Why, sir, for my part, I say the gentleman had drunk himself out of his five senses. And was, sir, as they say, cashiered.

Slen. I'll ne'er be drunk whilst I live again, but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick: if I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves.

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

*Enter Anne Page USL, with wine; Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, following.*

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

*Exit Anne Page USR*

Slen. O heaven! this is Mistress Anne Page.

Page. How now, Mistress Ford!

Fal. 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 we shall drink down all unkindness.

*Shal. and Slen. remain. Nym, Pistol exeunt USL, others USR.*

Slen. Mistress Anne Page? Daughter to Master Thomas Page? She is pretty virginity.

Shal. She is just as you will desire; and seven hundred pounds of money, and gold and silver, as her grandsire upon his death's-bed gave.

Slen. Did her grandsire leave her seven hundred pound? She has good gifts and possibilities.

Shal. Ay, and her father makes her a better penny. Come, coz; we wait for you. A word with you, coz: there is, as 'twere, a tender, a kind of tender. Do you understand me?

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

Shal. Nay, but understand me.

Slen. So I do, sir. I will do as my cousin Shallow says: I pray you, pardon me; you a justice of peace in his country, simple though I stand here.

Shal. The question is concerning your marriage; to Mistress Anne Page.

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

Shal. But, cousin Abraham Slender, can you love her? Can you carry your good will to the maid?

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

Shal. Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?

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

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

Slen. 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.

Shal. Ay, I think my cousin meant well.

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

Shal. Here comes fair Mistress Anne.

*Re-enter Anne Page USR*

Shal. Would I were young for your sake, Mistress Anne!

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

Shal. I will wait on him, fair Mistress Anne. [Exit.]

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

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

Anne. The dinner attends you, sir.

Slen. I am not a-hungry, I thank you, forsooth.

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

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

Anne. I pray you, sir, walk in.

Slen. 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; and, by my troth, I cannot abide the smell of hot meat since.

*Re-enter Page USR*

Page. Come, gentle Master Slender, come; we stay for you.

Slen. I'll eat nothing, I thank you, sir.

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

Slen. Nay, pray you, lead the way.

Page. Come on, sir.

Slen. Mistress Anne, yourself shall go first.

Anne. Not I, sir; pray you, keep on.

Slen. Truly, I will not go first! I will not do you that wrong.

Anne. I pray you, sir.

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

*Exeunt USR*

*{curtains close}*

## Scene 2 (I.iii)

*The Garter Inn. Enter Falstaff, Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, Robin from hall door. Host through curtains*

Fal Mine host of the Garter!

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

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

Host. Discard, bully Hercules: let them go.

Fal. I sit at ten pounds a week.

Host. Thou'rt an emperor, Cæsar, Kaiser, and Vizier. I will entertain Bardolph; he shall draw, he shall tap: said I well, bully Hector?

Fal. Do so, good mine host.

Host. I have spoke; let him follow. [To Bard.] Let me see thee froth and lime; follow. [Exit through curtains]

Fal. 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.

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

Pist. O base and beggarly wight! wilt thou the spigot wield?

*Exit Bardolph through curtains*

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

Fal. I am glad I am so acquit of this tinder-box: his thefts were too open; his filching was like an unskilful singer; he kept not time. Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

Pist. Why, then, let blisters ensue.

Fal. There is no remedy; I must be shifty.

Pist. Young ravens must have food.

Fal. Which of you know Ford of this town?

Pist. I ken the wight: he is of substance good.

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

Pist. Two yards, and more.

Fal. 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 her voice, to be translated to English, says, 'I am Sir John Falstaff's.'

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

Fal. Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse. I have writ me here a letter to her: and here another to Page's wife, who even now gave

me good eyes too, examined my parts with most judicious looks; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly.

Pist. Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

Nym. I thank thee for that humour.

Fal. 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 all gold and bounty. I will be cheaters to them both, and they shall both be exchequers to me. Go bear thou this letter to Mistress Page; and thou this to Mistress Ford: we will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

Pist. Shall I deceitful go-between become,  
And by my side wear steel? then, Lucifer take all!

Nym. I will not act as menial: here, take the letter:  
I will keep the reputation.

Fal. [To Robin] Hold, sirrah, bear you these letters tightly;  
Sail like my pinnace to these golden shores.  
Falstaff will learn the humour of the age,  
French thrift, you rogues; myself and skirted page.

*Exeunt Falstaff and Robin through hall door*

Pist. Let vultures gripe thy guts! and weighted dice  
Beguile your play by rolling high and low  
Pence I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,  
Base infidel!

Nym. I have operations  
In my head which be humours of revenge.

Pist. Wilt thou revenge?

Nym. By heaven and her stars!

Pist. With wit or steel?

Nym. With both the humours, I:  
I will discuss the humour of this love to Page.

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

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

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

*Exeunt through hall door*

### Scene 3 (I.iv)

*The Garter Inn. Enter Mistress Quickly, with box, and Robin, through audience*

Quick. Robin, you say your name is?

Robin. Ay, forsooth.

Quick. [disbelieving] And Master Slender's your master?

Robin. Ay, for fault of a better.

Quick. A softly-sprighted man, is he not?

Robin. Ay, forsooth: but he is a valiant fighter.

Quick. O, I should remember him: does he not hold up his head, as it were, and strut in his gait?

Robin. Yes, indeed, does he.

Quick. Well, heaven send Anne Page no worse fortune than Master Slender! I will do what I can for your master. Robin, I pray thee, go to the casement, and see if you can see my master, Master Doctor Caius, coming. If he find a page with me, here will be an old abusing of God's patience and the King's English.

Robin. I'll go watch. Alas! here comes your master.

Quick. Go behind the drape, good young man: he will not stay long. [Hides Robin.] He has asked me to bring him a secret box from his house and meet him here. He needs it at court.  
[Singing or humming] And down, down, adown-a, &c.

*Enter Doctor Caius from hall door*

Caius. Vat is you sing? Ma foi, il fait fort chaud. Je m'en vais à la cour,—la grande affaire. Pray you, 'ave you le boitier vert,—the box, the green-a box: do intend vat I speak? a green-a box.

Quick. Ay, forsooth; 'tis here.

Caius. Oui; mette-le au mon sac: dépêche, quickly. By my trot, I tarry too long. {Robin rustles curtain} —Od's me! Qu'ai-j'oublié! [Seeing Robin] O diable, diable! Who hides there? Villain! Espion! [Pulling Robin out.]

Quick. Good master, be content.

Caius. Wherefore shall I be content-a?

Quick. The young man is an honest man. He is no spy.

Caius. What shall de honest man do at the Garter Inn? dere is no honest young man dat shall come in here.

Quick. I beseech you, be not so choleric. He came of an errand to me.

Caius. Vell.

Robin. Ay, forsooth; to desire her to—

Quick. Peace, I pray you.

Caius. {to Mrs Q} Peace-a your tongue. {to Robin} Speak-a your tale.  
Robin. To desire this honest gentlewoman, your maid, to speak a good word to Mistress Anne Page for my master in the way of marriage.  
Caius. This is all, indeed, la! Baille me some paper. Tarry you a little-a while.  
[Writes.]  
Quick. [Aside to Robin] I'll do you your master what good I can: and the very yea and the no is, the French doctor, my master, himself is in love with Mistress Anne Page: but I know Anne's mind,—that's neither here nor there.  
Caius. You jack'nape, give-a this letter to your master. I will not have him meddle. 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 Robin through hall door*

Quick. Alas, he speaks but for his master.  
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 will myself have Anne Page.  
Quick. Sir, the maid loves you, and all shall be well. We must give folks leave to prate!  
Caius. I go to the court. By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door. [Exit through hall door]  
Quick. 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.  
Fent. {entering through hall door} Who's within there? ho!  
Quick. Who's there, I trow? Come in, I pray you.

*Enter Fenton.*

Fent. How now, good woman! how dost thou?  
Quick. The better that it pleases your good worship to ask.  
Fent. What news? how does pretty Mistress Anne?  
Quick. 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.  
Fent. Shall I do any good, thinkest thou? shall I not lose my suit?  
Quick. 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?  
Fent. Yes, marry, have I; what of that?  
Quick. Well, thereby hangs a tale:—good faith, but, I protest, 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 melancholy and musing: but for you—well, go to.  
Fent. Well, I shall see her to-day. Hold, there's money for thee; let me have thy voice in my behalf: if thou seest her before me, commend me.



Quick. 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.

Fent. Well, farewell; I am in great haste now.

Quick. Farewell to your worship. [Exit Fenton through hall door.] Truly, an honest gentleman: but Anne loves him not; for I know Anne's mind as well as another does.

*Exit through hall door*

## Scene 4 (II.i)

*{curtains open} In the town. Enter Mistress Page (USR), with a letter.*

Mrs Page. What, have I scaped love-letters in the holiday-time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them? Let me see. [Reads:]  
'Ask me no reason why I love you; for though Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I; go to, then, there's sympathy: you are merry, so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you love sack, and so do I; would you desire better sympathy? Let it suffice thee, Mistress Page,—at the least, if the love of soldier can suffice,—that I love thee. I will not say, pity me,—'tis not a soldier-like phrase; but I say, love me. By me, Thine own true knight, By day or night, Or any kind of light, With all his might For thee to fight, John Falstaff.'

What a ranting villain is this! O wicked, wicked world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age to show himself a young gallant! Why, he hath not been thrice in my company! 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 USL*

Mrs Ford. {seeing Mrs Page} Mistress Page! trust me, I was going to your house.

Mrs Page. And, trust me, I was coming to you. You look very ill. What's the matter, woman?

Mrs Ford. Here, read, read; perceive how I might be knighted. What tempest, I trow, threw this whale, with so many tuns of oil in his belly, ashore at Windsor? How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease. Did you ever hear the like?

Mrs Page. [comparing letters] Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs! To thy great comfort here's the twin-brother of thy letter. {gives her the letter} I warrant he hath a thousand of these letters, writ with blank space for different names,—sure, more. I will find you twenty lascivious turtles ere one chaste man.

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

Mrs Page. Nay, I know not: it makes me almost ready to wrangle with mine own honesty. Unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.

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

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

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

Mrs 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.

Mrs Ford. You are the happier woman.

Mrs Page. Let's consult together against this greasy knight.

*Enter Mistress Quickly USL*

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

Mrs Ford. Trust me, I thought on her: she'll fit it.

Mrs Page. You are come to see my daughter Anne?

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

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

*Exeunt Mrs Page, Mrs Ford, and Mrs Quickly USR*  
*Enter USL: Ford, with Pistol, and Page, with Nym.*

Ford. Well, I hope it be not so.

Pist. Hope is a turning wheel in some affairs: Sir John affects thy wife.

Ford. Why, sir, my wife is not young.

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

Ford. Love my wife!

Pist. With liver burning hot. Farewell.  
Take heed; have open eye; for thieves do foot by night:  
Take heed, ere summer comes, or cuckoo-birds do sing.  
Away, Sir Corporal Nym!— Believe it, he speaks sense. [Exit USL]

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 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. [Exit USL]

Ford. I will seek out Falstaff. 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. These that accuse him are a yoke of his discarded men; very rogues, now they be out of service.

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

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

Ford. I do not misdoubt my wife; but I would be loath to turn them together. A man may be too confident. Well, I will look further into't: and I have a disguise to sound Falstaff. If I find her honest, I lose not my labour; if she be otherwise, 'tis labour well bestowed.

*Exit USL*

## Scene 5 (III.ii)

*In the town. Enter Robin USR, followed by Mistress Page.*

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

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

Mrs Page. O, you are a flattering boy: now I see you'll be a courtier.

*Enter Ford USL*

Ford. Well met, Mistress Page. Whither go you?

Mrs 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.

Mrs Page. Be sure of that,—two other husbands.

Ford. Where had you this pretty weathercock?

Mrs Page. I cannot tell what name my husband had him of. —What do you call your knight's name, sirrah?

Robin. Sir John Falstaff.

Ford. Sir John Falstaff!

Mrs Page. I can never hit on's name. There is such a league between my good man and he!—Is your wife at home indeed?

Ford. Indeed she is.

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

*Exeunt Mrs Page and Robin USL, Robin leading*

Ford. Has Page any brains? hath he any eyes? hath he any thinking? He gives his wife's folly encouragement: and now she's going to my wife, and Falstaff's boy with her. Plots are laid; and our rebellious wives share damnation together. My assurance bids me search.

*Enter Page, Shallow, Slender, Host, and Caius. USL*

Shal., Page, &c. Well met, Master Ford.

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

Shal. I must excuse myself, Master Ford.

Slen. 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.

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

Slen. I hope I have your good will, father Page.

Page. You have, Master Slender; I stand wholly for you:— [to Caius] but my wife, master doctor, is for you altogether.

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 smells April and May: he will carry't, 'tis in his buttons; he will carry't.

Page. Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no means; 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; the wealth I have waits on my consent, and my consent goes not that way.

*Exeunt USR. {curtains close as they do so}*

## Scene 6 (II.ii)

*The Garter Inn. Enter Falstaff and Pistol from hall door*

Fal. I will not lend thee a penny.

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

Fal. Not a penny. 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 pair of baboons. When Mistress Bridget lost the handle of her fan, I took't upon mine honour thou hadst it not.

Pist. Didst not thou share? hadst thou not fifteen pence?

Fal. Reason, you rogue. At a word, hang no more about me. Go. You'll not bear a letter for me, you rogue! you stand upon your honour!

Pist. [seeing Mistress Quickly] See, here's a woman would speak with you.

Fal. Let her approach.

*Enter Mistress Quickly from hall door. Exit Pistol {hall door .He acknowledges Mrs Quickly}*

Quick. Give your worship good morrow.

Fal. Good morrow, good wife.

Quick. Not so, an't please your worship.

Fal. Good maid, then.

Quick. That I am; I'll be sworn;  
As my mother was, the first hour I was born.

Fal. I do believe the swearer. What with me?

Quick. Shall I vouchsafe your worship a word or two?

Fal. Two thousand, fair woman: and I'll vouchsafe thee the hearing.

Quick. There is one Mistress Ford, sir:—I pray, come a little nearer this ways:—I myself dwell with Master Doctor Caius,—

Fal. Well, on: Mistress Ford, you say,—

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

Fal. I warrant thee, nobody hears;—mine own people, mine own people.

Quick. Are they so? God bless them, and make them his servants!

Fal. Well, Mistress Ford;—what of her?

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

Fal. Mistress Ford;—come, Mistress Ford,—

Quick. Marry, this is the short and the long of it; you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the court lay

at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary. Yet there has been knights, and lords, and gentlemen, with their coaches; I warrant you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift; smelling so sweetly, all musk, and so rushling, that would have won any woman's heart; and, I warrant you, they could never get an eye-wink of her.

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

Quick. 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 absent from his house between ten and eleven.

Fal. Ten and eleven.

Quick. Ay, forsooth; and then you may come and see the picture, she says, that you know of: Master Ford, her husband, will be from home. He's a very jealous man: she leads a very disagreeable life with him, good heart.

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

Quick. 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 virtuous a civil modest wife, and one, I tell you, that will not miss morning nor evening prayer, as any is in Windsor: 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.

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

Quick. Blessing on your heart for't!

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

Quick. 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. Never a wife in Windsor leads a better life than she does. You must send her your page; no remedy.

Fal. Why, I will.

Quick. Nay, but do so, then: he may come and go between you both; 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.

Fal. Fare thee well: commend me to them both: there's my purse; I am yet thy debtor.

*Exit Mistress Quickly.*

Fal. This news distracts me! I'll make more of this old body than I have done. Good body, I thank thee.

*Enter Pistol, speaking from hall door.*



Pist. 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.

Fal. Brook is his name?

Pist. Ay, sir.

Fal. Call him in. [Exit Pistol] Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflow such liquor.

*Enter Ford disguised.*

Ford. Bless you, sir!

Fal. And you, sir! Would you speak with me?

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

Fal. You're welcome. What's your will?

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

Fal. Good Master Brook, I desire more acquaintance of you.

Ford. Good Sir John, I sue for yours: not to charge you; for they say, if money go before, all ways do lie open.

Fal. 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.

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

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

Fal. Speak, good Master Brook: I shall be glad to be your servant.

Ford. Sir,—I will be brief with you,—I shall discover a thing to you, wherein I must very much lay open mine own imperfection: but, good Sir John, you yourself know how easy it is to be such an offender.

Fal. Very well, sir; proceed.

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

Fal. Well, sir.

Ford. I have long loved her, bestowed much on her; followed her with a doting observance; bought many presents to give her. I have pursued her as love hath pursued me; but whatsoever I have merited, I have received none.

Fal. Have you received no promise of satisfaction at her hands?

Ford. Never.

Fal. Have you importuned her to such a purpose?

Ford. Never.

Fal. 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.

Fal. To what purpose have you unfolded this to me?

Ford. Sir John, you are a gentleman of excellent breeding, admirable discourse, generally allowed for your many war-like, court-like, and learned preparations.

Fal. O, sir!

Ford. Believe it, for you know it. There is money; spend it, spend it; spend more; spend all I have; only give me so much of your time in exchange of it, as to lay an amiable siege to the honesty of this Ford's wife: use your art of wooing; win her to consent to you: if any man may, you may as soon as any.

Fal. Would it apply well to the vehemency of your affection, that I should win what you would enjoy?

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

Fal. 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!

Fal. I say you shall.

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

Fal. Want no Mistress Ford, Master Brook. 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?

Fal. Hang him, poor cuckoldly knave! I know him not: —yet I wrong him to call him poor; they say the jealous knave hath masses of money; I will use his wife 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.

Fal. Hang him; I will awe him with my cudgel: it shall hang like a meteor o'er the cuckold's horns. Master Brook, thou shalt lie with his wife. —Come to me soon at night. Ford's a knave, and thou, Master Brook, shalt know him for knave and cuckold. Come to me soon at night. [Exit through curtains.]

Ford. What a damned 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. See the hell of having a false woman! My bed shall be abused, my coffers ransacked, my reputation gnawn at; Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will rather trust an Irishman with my aquavitæ bottle than my wife with herself. God be praised for my jealousy!—I will

detect my wife, be revenged on Falstaff, and laugh at Page. Fie, fie, fie!  
cuckold! cuckold! cuckold!

*Exit to hall door.*

*{curtains open}*

## Scene 7 (III.iii)

*Ford's house. Enter Mistress Ford and Mistress Page USR.*

Mrs Page. Quickly, quickly!—is the laundry-basket—

Mrs Ford. I warrant. What, John! What, Elizabeth, I say!

*Enter John and Elizabeth, with a basket, from hall door.*

Mrs Page. Come, come, come.

Mrs Ford. Here, set it down.

Mrs Page. Give your servants the charge; we must be brief.

Mrs Ford. Marry, as I told you before, John and Elizabeth, 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 to Datchet-mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch close by the Thames side.

Mrs Page. [to servants, who look gormless] You will do it?

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

*Exeunt John & Elizabeth through hall door.*

Mrs Page. Here comes little Robin.

*Enter Robin USL*

Mrs Ford. How now, my young sparrow-hawk! what news with you?

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

Mrs Page. You little weathercock, 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.

Mrs 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.

Mrs Ford. Do so. Go tell thy master I am alone. [Exit Robin USL.] Mistress Page, remember you your cue.

Mrs Page. I warrant thee, I shall. [Exit USL.]

Mrs Ford. Go to, then: we'll use this gross watery pumpkin as he deserves.

*Enter Falstaff DSR ('back door').*

Fal. '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!

Mrs Ford. O sweet Sir John!

Fal. Mistress Ford, I cannot lie, 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.

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

Fal. I see how thine eye would emulate the diamond: thou hast the beauty of the brow that becomes such fashionable attire.

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

Fal. By the Lord, thou art a traitor to say so; and the firm fixture of thy foot would give an excellent motion to thy gait in a semi-circled farthingale. Come, thou canst not hide it.

Mrs Ford. Believe me, there's no such thing in me.

Fal. What made me love thee? let that persuade thee there's something extraordinary in thee. I cannot lie, and say thou art this and that, like a many of these lipping hawthorn-buds, that come like perfumed women in men's apparel; I cannot: but I love thee.

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

Fal. Thou mightst as well say I love to walk by the slaughterhouse.

Mrs Ford. Well, heaven knows how I love you; nay, I must tell you, so you do.

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.

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

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

*Falstaff hides himself DSR. Re-enter Mistress Page and Robin USL.*

Mrs Ford. What's the matter? how now!

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

Mrs Ford. What's the matter, good Mistress Page?

Mrs Page. O well-a-day, Mistress Ford! having an honest man to your husband, to give him such cause of suspicion! Shame upon you! how am I mistook in you!

Mrs Ford. Why, alas, what's the matter?

Mrs Page. Your husband's coming hither, woman, to search for a gentleman that he says is here now in the house, by your consent, to take an ill advantage of his absence: you are undone. If you have a friend here, convey him out. Defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

Mrs Ford. What shall I do? There is a gentleman my dear friend; and I fear not mine own shame so much as his peril.

Mrs Page. Your husband's here at hand; bethink you of some conveyance. 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 for washing; send him by your two servants to Datchet-mead.

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

Fal. [Coming forward] Let me see't, O, let me see't!—I'll in, I'll in. —Follow your friend's counsel. —I'll in.

Mrs Page. What, Sir John Falstaff! [aside, to Falstaff] Was this in your letters, knight?

Fal. [to Mrs Page] I love thee. —Help me away. —Let me creep in here. —I'll never— [Gets into the basket; he covers himself and they cover him with foul linen.]

Mrs Page. [to Robin] Help to cover your master, boy. —Call your servants, Mistress Ford. —You dissembling knight!

Mrs Ford. What, John! Elizabeth! John!

*Exit Robin USL. Re-enter John and Elizabeth.*

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

*Enter Ford, Page and Caius USL.*

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?

Elizabeth. To the laundress, forsooth.

*Exeunt Servants with the basket through hall door.*

Ford. Gentlemen, 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 USL.] So, now escape!

Page. Good Master Ford, be contented: you wrong yourself too much.

Ford. True, Master Page. Up, gentlemen; you shall see sport anon: follow me, gentlemen. [Exit USR.]

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

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

*Exeunt Page and Caius USR.*

Mrs Page. Is there not a double excellency in this?

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

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

Mrs 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?

Mrs Page. We will do it: let him be sent for to-morrow, eight o'clock, to have amends.

*Re-enter Ford, Page and Caius USR.*

Ford. I cannot find him: maybe the knave bragged of that he could not compass.

Mrs Page. [Aside to Mrs Ford] Heard you that?

Mrs Ford. You use me well, Master Ford, do you?  
Ford. Ay, I do so.  
Mrs Page. You do yourself mighty wrong, Master Ford.  
Ford. Ay, ay; I must bear it.  
Page. Fie, fie, Master Ford! are you not ashamed? What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination?  
Ford. 'Tis my fault, Master Page: I suffer for it.  
Caius. By gar, I see 'tis an honest woman.  
Ford. Well, I promised you a dinner. —Come, come; 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.

*Exeunt USR.*

*{curtains close as they go off}*

*{INTERVAL}*

## Scene 8 (III.iv)

*In the town. Music.*

*Fenton and Anne Page are on stage as curtains open*

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

Anne. Alas, how then?

Fent. Why, thou must be thyself.  
He doth object I am too great of birth;  
And that, my estate being gall'd with my expense,  
I seek to heal it only by his wealth:  
He tells me 'tis a thing impossible  
I should love thee but as a property.

Anne. Maybe he tells you true.

Fent. No, God so speed me in my time to come!  
Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth  
Was the first motive that I woo'd thee, Anne:  
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value  
Than stamps in gold or sums in sealèd bags;  
And 'tis the very riches of thyself  
That now I aim at.

Anne. 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 USR, going DSR.*

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

Slen. I'll shoot my Cupid's arrow; I shall venture it.

Shal. Be not dismayed.

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

Quick. [to Anne] Hark ye; Master Slender would speak a word with you.

Anne. I come to him. [Aside] This is my father's choice.  
O, what a world of vile ill-favour'd faults  
Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a-year!

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

Shal. She's coming; to her, coz. O boy, thou hadst a father!

Slen. I had a father, Mistress Anne;—my cousin can tell you good jests of him.  
Pray you, cousin, tell Mistress Anne the jest, how my father stole two geese  
out of a pen, good cousin.

Shal. Mistress Anne, my cousin loves you.

Slen. Ay, that I do; as well as I love any woman in Gloucestershire.



Shal. He will maintain you like a gentlewoman.

Slen. Ay, that I will, as well as any squire.

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

Anne. Good Master Shallow, let him woo for himself.

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

Anne. Now, Master Slender,—

Slen. Now, good Mistress Anne,—

Anne. What is your will?

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

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

Slen. Truly, for mine own part, I would little or nothing with you. Your father and my cousin hath made motions: they can tell you how things go better than I can: you may ask your father; here he comes.

*Enter Page and Mistress Page USR, from house.*

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 dispos'd of.

Fent. Nay, Master Page, be not impa-ti-ent.

Mrs Page. Good Master Fenton, come not to my child.

Fent. 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, Shal., and Slen. USL.*

Quick. [to Fenton] Speak to Mistress Page.

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

Anne. Good mother, do not marry me to yond' fool.

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

Quick. That's my master, master doctor.

Anne. Alas, I had rather be set quick i' the earth,  
And bowl'd to death with turnips!

Mrs 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.

Fent. Farewell, gentle mistress: farewell, Nan.

*Exeunt Mrs Page and Anne USR, to house.*

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

Fent. I thank thee; and I pray thee, once to-night  
Give my sweet Nan this ring.— there's for thy pains. {gives a coin}

Quick. Now heaven send thee good fortune! [Exit Fenton USL.] 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 Master Slender had her; or  
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 specially for Master Fenton.  
Well, I must of another errand to Sir John Falstaff from my two mistresses!

*Exit USL.*

*{curtains close}*

## Scene 9 (III.v)

*The Garter Inn. Enter Falstaff, hall door, with wet hair, wringing out clothes.*

Fal. Bardolph, I say,—

Bard. Here, sir. {entering through curtains}

Fal. Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in't. [Exit Bard through curtains.]  
Have I lived to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher's offal, and to be thrown in the Thames? You may know by my size that I have a kind of alacrity in sinking; if the bottom were as deep as hell, I should down,—a death that I abhor; for the water swells a man; and what a thing should I have been when I had been swelled!

*Re-enter Bardolph with sack. {Mistress Quickly is entering from hall door}*

Bard. {seeing her} Here's Mistress Quickly, sir, to speak with you.

Fal. Call her in.

Bard. Come in, woman!

Quick. By your leave; I cry you mercy: give your worship good morrow.

Fal. Take away these chalices. Go heat me a gallon of sack.

Bard. With eggs, sir?

Fal. Simple of itself; I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage. [Exit Bardolph.] How now!

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

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

Quick. Alas the day! good heart, that was not her fault: she does so scold her men; they mistook their direction.

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

Quick. Well, she laments, sir: 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: She'll make you amends, I warrant you.

Fal. Well, I will visit her: tell her so. Between eight and nine, sayest thou? Well, be gone: I will not fail her.

Quick. Peace be with you, sir. [Exit hall door, nodding to Ford/Brook who enters.]

*Ford, as Brook, is entering from hall door.*

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

Ford. Bless you, sir!

Fal. Now, Master Brook,—you come to know what hath passed between me and Ford's wife?

Ford. That, indeed, Sir John, is my business.

- Fal. Master Brook, I will not lie to you: I was at her house the hour she appointed me.
- Ford. And how sped you, sir?
- Fal. Very ill-favouredly, Master Brook.
- Ford. How so, sir? Did she change her determination?
- Fal. No, Master Brook; but the skulking cuckold her husband, Master Brook, dwelling in a continual 'larum of jealousy, comes me in the instant of our encounter, after we had embraced, kissed, and, as it were, spoke the prologue of our comedy; and at his heels a rabble of his companions, to search his house for his wife's love.
- Ford. And did he search for you, and could not find you?
- Fal. 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 laundry-basket.
- Ford. A laundry-basket!
- Fal. By the Lord, a laundry-basket!—rammed me in with foul shirts and smocks, socks, foul stockings, greasy napkins; that, Master Brook, there was the rankest compound of villanous smell that ever offended nostril.
- Ford. And how long lay you there?
- Fal. 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 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: 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; and when I was more than half stewed in grease to be thrown into the Thames, and cooled, glowing hot, in that surge, hissing like a horse-shoe.
- Ford. Sir, I am sorry that for my sake you have suffered all this. My suit, then, is desperate; you'll undertake her no more?
- Fal. Master Brook, I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been into Thames, ere I will leave her thus. Her husband is this morning gone a-birding: I have received from her another embassy of meeting; 'twixt eight and nine is the hour, Master Brook.
- Ford. 'Tis past eight already, sir.
- Fal. Is it? I will then address me to my appointment. Come to me at your convenient leisure, and you shall know how I speed; and the conclusion shall be crowned with your enjoying her. Master Brook, you shall cuckold Ford.  
[Exit through curtains.]
- Ford. Hum! ha! is this a vision? is this a dream? do I sleep? Master Ford, awake! There's a hole made in your best coat, Master Ford. This 'tis to be married! this 'tis to have linen and laundry-baskets! Well, I will now take the lecher;

he is at my house; he cannot 'scape me. If I have horns to make one mad,  
let the proverb go with me,—I'll be horn-mad.

*Exit through hall door.*

*Music.*

*{John and Elizabeth push laundry basket into position.}*

## Scene 10 (IV.ii)

*Ford's house. Enter Mistress Ford, USL, followed by Falstaff.*

Fal. Mistress Ford, your sorrow hath atoned for my sufferance. I see you are compliant in your love. But are you sure of your husband now?

Mrs Ford. He's a-birding, sweet Sir John.

Mrs Page. [Within from USL] What, ho, friend Ford! what, ho!

Mrs Ford. Step into the chamber, Sir John.

*Exit Falstaff DSR. Enter Mistress Page USL.*

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

Mrs Ford. Why, none but mine own people. [Aside to her] Speak louder.

Mrs Page. Truly, I am so glad you have nobody here.

Mrs Ford. Why?

Mrs Page. Your husband is in his old lunacy again: he takes on yonder with my husband; rails against all married mankind; curses all Eve's daughters: I am glad the fat knight is not here.

Mrs Ford. Why, does he talk of him?

Mrs Page. Of none but him; and swears he was carried out, the last time he searched for him, in a basket; protests to my husband he is now here; and will make another experiment of his suspicion: but I am glad the knight is not here; now he shall see his own foolery.

Mrs Ford. I am undone!—the knight is here.

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

Mrs Ford. Which way should he go? Shall I put him into the basket again?

*Re-enter Falstaff DSR.*

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

Mrs Page. Alas, three of Master Ford's brothers watch the door with pistols.

Fal. What shall I do?—I'll creep into the oven door.

Mrs Ford. He will seek there, on my word. And if you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John. Unless you go out disguised,— [to Mrs Page] How might we disguise him?

Mrs 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.

Fal. Good hearts, devise something.

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

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

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

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

*Exit Falstaff USR.*

Mrs 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.

Mrs Page. Heaven guide him to thy husband's cudgel!

Mrs Ford. But is my husband coming?

Mrs Page. Ay, he is; and talks of the basket too, howsoever he hath had intelligence.

Mrs Ford. We'll try that; for I'll appoint my servants to carry the basket again, to meet him at the door with it, as they did last time. Go up; dress him like the witch of Brentford. I'll bring linen for him straight. [Exit DSL.]

Mrs Page. 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, to speak is not enough.

*Exit USR. Re-enter Mistress Ford, beckoning John and Elizabeth in from hall door.*

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

John. Come, come, take it up.

Elizabeth. Pray heaven it be not full of knight again.

John. I hope not; I had as willingly bear so much lead.

*Enter Ford, Page, Shallow, and Caius USL.*

Ford. Set down the basket, villain! Wife, I say! Come forth! Behold what honest clothes you send for washing!

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

Caius. Why, this is lunacy! this is mad as a mad dog!

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

Ford. So say I too, sir.

*Re-enter Mistress Ford DSL.*

Ford. Come hither, 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?

Mrs Ford. God be my witness you do, if you suspect me in any dishonesty.

Ford. Come forth, sirrah! [Telling servants to pull clothes out of the basket.]

Page. This passes!

Mrs Ford. Are you not ashamed? let the clothes alone.  
Ford. I shall find you anon.  
Caius. 'Tis unreasonable! Will you take up your wife's clothes? Come away.  
Ford. Empty the basket, I say!  
Page. 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? Pluck me out all the linen.

*Servants empty the basket.*

Page. Here's no man.  
Shal. By my fidelity, this is not well, Master Ford; this wrongs you.  
Caius. Master Ford, you must not follow the imaginations of your own heart: this is jealousy.  
Ford. Well, he's not here I seek for. {Servants refill basket and leave with it}  
Page. No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.  
Ford. Help to search my house; once more search with me.  
Mrs Ford. {calling USR} 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?  
Mrs Ford. Why, it is my maid's aunt of Brentford.  
Ford. A witch! Have I not forbid her my house? We are simple men; she works by charms, by spells. Come down, you witch, you hag; come down, I say!  
Mrs Ford. Nay, good, sweet husband!—Good gentlemen, let him not strike the old woman.

*Re-enter Falstaff USR in woman's clothes, and Mistress Page.*

Mrs Page. [To Falstaff, as Witch of Brentford] Come, come, give me your hand.  
Ford. I'll give her my hand! [Beating him] Out of my door, you witch, you hag, you baggage, out, out!

*Exit Falstaff USL.*

Mrs Page. Are you not ashamed? I think you have killed the poor woman.  
Ford. Hang her, witch!  
Caius. I think the woman is a witch indeed: I like not when a woman has a great beard; I spy a great beard under her muffler.  
Ford. I beseech you, gentlemen, follow; see but the issue of my jealousy.  
Page. Let's obey his humour a little further: come, gentlemen.

*Exeunt Ford, Page, Shal., and Caius USR.*

Mrs Page. Trust me, he beat him most pitifully.



Mrs Ford. Nay, that he did not; he beat him most unpitifully methought.

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

Mrs Ford. What think you? may we, with the warrant of womanhood and the witness of a good conscience, pursue him with any further revenge? Shall we tell our husbands how we have served him?

Mrs Page. Yes, by all means; if they can find in their hearts the unvirtuous fat knight shall be further afflicted, we two will still be the agents.

Mrs Ford. I'll warrant they'll have him publicly shamed.

Mrs Page. Come, to the forge with it, then; shape it: I would not have things cool. Strike while the iron is hot!

*Exeunt USR.*

*{Music, while actors go backstage to other side.  
Curtains remain open. Lights down and up.}*

## Scene 11 (IV.iv)

*Ford's house. Enter Page with Mistress Page, and Ford with Mistress Ford, USL.*

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

Mrs Page. Within a quarter of an hour.

Ford. Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt;  
I rather will suspect the sun with cold  
Than thee with wantonness: now doth thy honour stand,  
In him that was of late an heretic,  
As firm as faith.

Page. 'Tis well, 'tis well; no more:  
Be not as extreme in submission as in offence.  
But let our plot go forward: let our wives  
Yet once again, to make us public sport,  
Appoint a meeting with this old fat fellow,  
Where we may take him, and disgrace him for it.

Ford. There is no better way than that they spoke of.

Page. To send him word that in the Park they'll meet him?  
Fie, fie! at midnight? sure, he'll never come.  
Thrown in the rivers with the soiled linens,  
Beaten grievously, as aged woman:  
His flesh is punish'd, he'll have no desires.

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

Mrs Page. There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,  
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor forest,  
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.  
The superstitious men of former times  
Deliver'd to our age this tale of Herne the hunter.

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

Mrs Ford. This is our device;  
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us.

Page. Well, let it not be doubted but he'll come:  
And in this shape when you have brought him thither,  
What shall be done with him? what is your plot?

Mrs Page. That likewise have we thought upon, and thus:  
Nan Page my daughter and my little son



## Scene 12 (IV.v[part]/IV.vi/V.i)

*The Garter Inn. {Falstaff enters through curtains}*

Fal. I have been deceived and beaten too. Well, if my wind were but long enough to say my prayers, I would repent.

*Enter Mistress Quickly from hall door.*

Fal. Now, whence come you?

Quick. From the two parties, forsooth.

Fal. The devil take one party, and his dam the other! and so they shall be both in hell. I have suffered more for their sakes, more than my wretched disposition is able to bear.

Quick. And have not they suffered? One of them; Mistress Ford, good heart, is beaten black and blue, that you cannot see a white spot about her.

Fal. 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 common stocks, for a witch.

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

Fal. Come up into my chamber.

*Exeunt through curtains.*

*Enter Host, followed by Fenton from hall door.*

Host. Master Fenton, talk not to me: I will have nothing more to do with it.

Fent. Yet hear me speak. Assist me in my purpose,  
And, as I am a gentleman, I'll give thee  
A hundred pound in gold more than your loss.

Host. I will hear you, Master Fenton; and I will at the least keep your counsel.

Fent. From time to time I have acquainted you  
With the dear love I bear to fair Anne Page;  
Who mutually hath answer'd my affection,  
So far forth as herself might be her chooser,  
E'en to my wish: I have a letter from her  
Of such contents as you will wonder at;  
The mirth whereof so chimed with my concerns,  
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,

Must my sweet Nan present the Fairy Queen;  
The purpose why, is here: in which disguise,  
While other various jests are there a-foot,  
Her father hath commanded her to slip  
Away with Slender, and with him at Eton  
Immediately to marry: she hath consented:  
Now, sir,  
Her mother, even strong against that match,  
And firm for Doctor Caius, hath appointed  
That he shall likewise shuffle her away,  
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;  
And in that habit, when Slender sees his time,  
She shall go with him: her mother hath intended  
That quaint in green she shall be loose enrobed,  
And when the doctor spies his vantage ripe,  
To pinch her by the hand, and, on that token,  
The maid hath given consent to go with him.

Host. Which means she to deceive, father or mother?

Fent. Both, my good host, to go along with me:  
And here it rests,—that you'll procure the vicar  
To stay for me at church 'twixt twelve and one,  
And, in the lawful name of marrying,  
To give our hearts united ceremony.

Host. Well, hasten with your plan; I'll to the vicar:  
Bring you the maid, you shall not lack a priest.

Fent. So shall I evermore be bound to thee;  
Besides, I'll make a present recompense.

*Exeunt through hall door.*

*Enter Falstaff and Mistress Quickly through curtains.*

Fal. Prithee, no more prattling; go. This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in  
odd numbers. Away!

Quick. {as she exits} I'll do what I can to get you a pair of horns.

*Exit Mrs Quickly through audience. Enter Ford as Brook through hall door.*

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

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

Fal. I went to her, Master Brook, as you see, like a poor old man: but I came  
from her like a poor old woman. That same knave Ford, her husband beat  
me grievously, in the shape of a woman; for in the shape of man, Master  
Brook, I fear not Goliath. I am in haste; go with me: I'll tell you all, Master

Brook. I'll tell you strange things of this knave Ford, on whom to-night I will be revenged, and I will deliver his wife into your hand. Strange things in hand, Master Brook! Follow.

*Exeunt, Falstaff leading through hall door*

## Scene 13 (V.ii/iii/v)

*In Windsor Park. Music.*

*Page, Shallow, Slender from USR, and Mrs Page, Mrs Ford, Caius from USL circle on the stage with candles. Exeunt whence they came.*

*Enter Page, Shallow, and Slender.*

- Page. Come, come; we'll lie i'the castle-ditch till we see the light of our fairies. Remember, son Slender, my daughter.
- Slen. I have spoke with her: I come to her in white; by that I know her.
- Shal. Ay, forsooth; the white will decipher her well enough.
- Page. The night is dark; light and spirits will become it well. God prosper our sport! No man means evil but the devil, and we shall know him by his horns. Let's away; follow me.

*Exeunt.*

*Enter Mistress Page, Mistress Ford, and Doctor Caius USL to DSL.*

- Mrs Page. Master doctor, my daughter is in green: when you see your time, take her by the hand, away with her to the deanery. Go before into the Park: we two must go together.
- Caius. I know vat I have to do. Adieu.
- Mrs Page. Fare you well, sir. [Exit Caius.] My husband will not rejoice so much at the abuse of Falstaff as he will chafe at the doctor's marrying my daughter: but 'tis no matter; better a little chiding than a great deal of heart-break.
- Mrs Ford. Where is Nan now and her troop of fairies?
- Mrs Page. They are all lain in a pit hard by Herne's oak, with obscured lights; which, at the very instant of Falstaff's and our meeting, they will at once display to the night.
- Mrs Ford. That cannot choose but amaze him.
- Mrs Page. If he be not amazed, he will be mocked; if he be amazed, he will every way be mocked.
- Mrs Ford. We'll betray him finely.
- Mrs Page. Against such lewdsters and their lechery  
Those that betray them do no treachery.
- Mrs Ford. The hour draws on. We await the mighty hunter.

*Exeunt USL.*

*Enter Falstaff USR, with buck's horns on his head. Goes DSR.*

- Fal. The Windsor bell hath struck twelve; the minute draws on. Now, the hot-blooded gods assist me! Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns. O powerful love! that, in some respects, makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast. Jupiter, thou wast a swan for the love of Leda.

For me, I am here a Windsor stag; and the fattest, I think, i' the forest. Who comes here? my doe?

*Enter Mistress Ford and Mistress Page USL. Go DSL.*

Mrs Ford. Sir John! art thou there, my deer? my male deer?

Fal. My doe! Let the sky thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves, hail kissing-comfits; let there come a tempest of provocation, I will shelter me here.

Mrs Ford. Mistress Page is come with me, sweetheart.

Fal. Divide me, each a haunch, and my horns I bequeath your husbands. Speak I like Herne the hunter? Why, now is Cupid a conscientious child; he makes restitution.

*Noise of horns.*

Mrs Page. Alas, what noise?

Mrs Ford. Heaven forgive our sins!

Fal. What should this be?

Mrs Ford. Away, away!

Mrs Page. Away, away!

*They run off USL. Falstaff moves SC.*

Fal. I think the devil will not have me damned; he would never cross me thus.

*Enter Pistol, and Mistress Quickly through audience. Go to apron stage.*

*Page, Shallow, Slender; Mrs Page, Mrs Ford, Caius circle as before with candles.*

Quick. Fairies, black, grey, green, and white,  
You moonshine revellers, and shades of night,  
You orphan heirs of fixèd destiny,  
Attend your office and your quality.  
Crier Hobgoblin, make the fairy oyes.

Pist. Elves, list your names; silence, you airy toys.  
Cricket, to Windsor chimneys shalt thou leap:  
Where fires thou find'st unraked and hearths unswept,  
There pinch the maids as blue as bilberry:  
Our radiant queen hates sluts and sluttery.

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

*Boy in white goes DSR; Boy in green goes DSL.*

Quick. Away; disperse: but till 'tis one o'clock,  
Our dance of custom round about the oak  
Of Herne the hunter, let us not forget.

Pist. 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:



Vile worm, thou wast o'erlooked e'en in thy birth.

Quick. 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.

Pist. A trial, come.

Quick. Come, will this wood take fire?

*Those circling with candles point them at Falstaff to 'burn' him.*

Fal. Oh, Oh, Oh!

Quick. Corrupt, corrupt, and tainted in desire!  
About him, fairies; sing a scornful rhyme;  
And, as you trip, still pinch him to your time.

*Music. Circling continues.*

*Doctor Caius from USL steals away boy in green. Anne takes boy's place.  
Slender from USR takes off boy in white. Fenton from USL steals away Anne Page.  
A noise of hunting is heard. Falstaff pulls off his buck's head, and rises.*

*Page, Ford. Mistress Page and Mistress Ford remain. Enter Ford USL. Other circlers exeunt  
whence they came.*

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

Mrs Page. I pray you, come, hold up the jest no higher.  
Now, good Sir John, how like you Windsor wives?  
See you these, husband? [points to the horns] do not these yokes  
Become the forest better than the town?

Ford. Now, sir, who's a cuckold now? Master Brook, Falstaff's a knave, a cuckoldly  
knave; here are his horns: and, Master Brook, he hath enjoyed nothing of  
Ford's but his laundry-basket, his cudgel, and twenty pounds of money,  
which must be paid to Master Brook; his horses are impounded for it, Master  
Brook.

Mrs Ford. Sir John, I will never take you for my love again; but I will always count you  
my deer.

Fal. I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass. And these are not fairies? I  
was in the thought they were not fairies: and yet the guiltiness of my mind,  
the sudden surprise, drove the foppery into a received belief, despite all  
rhyme and reason, that they were fairies. Well, I am the subject of your  
derision: you have the advantage of me; use me as you will.

Ford. Marry, sir, we'll bring you to Windsor, to one Master Brook, that you have  
deceived of money: I think to repay that money will be a biting affliction.

Page. Yet be cheerful, knight: thou shalt eat a posset to-night at my house; where  
I will desire thee to laugh at my wife, that now laughs at thee: tell her  
Master Slender hath married her daughter.

Mrs Page. [Aside] I doubt that: if Anne Page be my daughter, she is, by this, Doctor Caius' wife.

*Enter Slender with boy in white. Go to SC.*

Slen. Whoa, ho! ho, father Page!

Page. Son, how now, son! have you the matter settled?

Slen. Settled? I came yonder at Eton to marry Mistress Anne Page, and she's a great loutish boy. If it had not been i' the church, I would have beaten him, or he should have beaten me. I took a stable boy for a girl. If I had been married to him, for all he was in woman's apparel, I would not have treated him as wife.

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

Slen. I went to her in white, as Anne and I had appointed; and yet it was not Anne, but a stable boy.

Mrs 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.

*Exeunt Slender and boy in white. Enter Caius and boy in green.*

Caius. Vere is Mistress Page? By gar, I am deceived: I ha' married un garçon, a boy; un paysan, by gar, a boy; it is not Anne Page: by gar, I am lead astray.

Mrs Page. Why, did you take her in green?

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 USL. Go SC between Falstaff and Fords.*

Page. How now, Master Fenton!

Anne. Pardon, good father! good my mother, pardon!

Page. Now, mistress, how went you not with Master Slender?

Mrs Page. Why went you not with master doctor, maid?

Fent. You do amaze her: hear the truth of it.  
You would have married her most shamefully,  
Where there was no reciprocal of love.  
The truth is, she and I, long since contracted,  
Are now so sure that nothing mutual dissolve us.  
The offence is holy that she hath committed;  
And this deceit loses the name of craft,  
Of disobedience, or breach of duty;  
Since therein doth my Nan avoid and shun  
A thousand irreligious cursèd hours,  
Which forcèd marriage would have brought upon her.

Ford. Stand not amazed; here is no remedy:  
In love the heav'ns themselves do guide us all;

Fal. Though you have ta'en a stand to strike at me,  
Yet am I glad your arrow missed the mark.

Page. What remedy? Fenton, God give thee joy!  
What we cannot avoid we must embrace.

Fal. The hunting dogs have you released this night:  
When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer are chased.

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

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

*Music.*

*Formal dance: Ford/Mrs Ford, Page/Mrs Page, Fenton/Anne, Falstaff/Mrs Quickly*