

# MERRY WIVES

*Mistresses Page and Ford discover they've received identical love letters from Falstaff and plot revenge.*

*Falstaff plans to woo Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, and through them, to get their husbands' money*

## FALSTAFF

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. Now, the report goes she has all the rule of her husband's purse: he hath a legion of angels. 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; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly. O, she did so course o'er my exteriors with such a greedy intention, that the appetite of her eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning-glass! Here's another letter to her: she bears the purse too; she is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will be cheater to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me; they shall be my East and West Indies, and I will trade to them both.

*Ford has learned that his wife plans to meet Falstaff (to exact her revenge, but Ford doesn't know that).*

## FORD

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. Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name. Page is an ass, a secure ass: he will trust his wife; he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, or an Irishman with my bottle, than my wife with herself; 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!

*angel – gold coin*

*burning-glass – magnifying glass*

*exchequer – treasury*

*cuckold – husband of an unfaithful wife*

## MISTRESS PAGE

What's the matter, woman?

## MISTRESS FORD

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

## MISTRESS PAGE

Hang the trifle, woman! take the honor. What is it?

## MISTRESS FORD

If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment or so, I could be knighted.

## MISTRESS PAGE

What? thou liest! Sir Alice Ford!

## MISTRESS FORD

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

## MISTRESS PAGE

Letter for letter, but that the name of Page and Ford differs! To thy great comfort in this mystery of ill opinions, here's the twin-brother of thy letter: 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-- 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. Sure, unless he know some strain in me, that I know not myself, he would never have boarded me in this fury.

## MISTRESS FORD

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

## MISTRESS PAGE

So will I! If he come under my hatches, I'll never to sea again. Let's be revenged on him: let's appoint him a meeting; give him a show of comfort in his suit and lead him on with a fine-baited delay.

## MISTRESS FORD

I will consent to act any of villainy against him. Let's consult together against this greasy knight.

*Mistress Ford receives an inappropriate "booty letter" from Falstaff and shares her reaction with the audience (this monologue is extracted from the scene on the previous page).*

### **MISTRESS FORD**

If it were not for one trifling respect, I could come to such honor! If I would but go to hell for an eternal moment or so, I could be knighted. We burn daylight. Here. 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. What tempest 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?

*The belligerent French Doctor Caius has challenged the timid Welsh parson Hugh Evans to a duel. Evans tries to dissuade Caius from fighting while putting on a good show for their friends who are watching.*

### **CAIUS**

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

### **EVANS**

[Aside] Pray you, use your patience: in good time.

### **CAIUS**

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

### **EVANS**

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

*Aloud*

I will knog your urinals about your knave's cockscomb for missing your meetings and appointments.

### **CAIUS**

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

### **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*

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

### **CAIUS**

Ay, dat is very good; excellent.

**Warning:** the next two monologues are short on intention and long on goofy accents. If you can play the intention (and the voice), go for it. If not, stick with one of the other monologues or scenes.

*The Welsh parson, Sir Hugh Evans, proposes a match between the lovely Anne Page and the eligible but hopeless Abraham Slender.*

### **EVANS**

There is a device in my prain, which peradventure prings goot discretions with it: there is Anne Page, which is daughter to Master Thomas Page, which is pretty virginity, and seven hundred pounds of moneys, and gold and silver, is her grandsire upon his death's-bed--Got deliver to a joyful resurrections!--give, when she is able to overtake seventeen years old: it were a goot motion if we leave our pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage between Master Abraham and Mistress Anne Page.

*The French doctor, Dr. Caius, gives a letter of challenge to his manservant, Rugby.*

### **CAIUS**

You jack'nape, give-a this letter to Sir Hugh; by gar, it is a shallenge: I will cut his throat in dee park; and I will teach a scurvy jack-a-nape priest to meddle or make. You may be gone; it is not good 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: By gar, I vill kill de Jack priest; and I have appointed mine host of de Jarteer to measure our weapon. By gar, I will myself have Anne Page. Rugby, come to the court with me. By gar, if I have not Anne Page, I shall turn your head out of my door. Follow my heels, Rugby.