

The Merry Wives of Windsor

4.5

Enter the Host of the Garter and Simple

HOST What wouldst thou have, boor? What, thick-skin?
Speak, breathe, discuss. Brief, short, quick, snap.

SIMPLE Marry, sir, I come to speak with Sir John Falstaff,
from Master Slender.

HOST There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his 5
standing-bed and truckle-bed. 'Tis painted about with
the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new. Go knock and
call. He'll speak like an Anthropophaginian unto thee.
Knock, I say.

SIMPLE There's an old woman, a fat woman, gone up 10
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 15
Ephesian, calls.

SIR JOHN (*within*) 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! 20
Fie!

Enter Sir John Falstaff

SIR JOHN 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
Brentford? 25

SIR JOHN Ay, marry was it, mussel-shell. What would you
with her?

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

SIR JOHN I spake with the old woman about it.

SIMPLE And what says she, I pray, sir?

SIR JOHN Marry, she says that the very same man that

beguiled Master Slender of his chain cozened him of it. 35
SIMPLE I would I could have spoken with the woman
herself. I had other things to have spoken with her,
too, from him.

SIR JOHN What are they? Let us know.

HOST Ay, come, quick. 40

[SIMPLE] I may not conceal them, sir.

HOST Conceal them, or thou diest.

SIMPLE Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress
Anne Page, to know if it were my master's fortune to
have her or no. 45

SIR JOHN 'Tis, 'tis his fortune.

SIMPLE What, sir?

SIR JOHN To have her or no. Go say the woman told me
so.

SIMPLE May I be bold to say so, sir? 50

SIR JOHN Ay, Sir Tike; who more bold?

SIMPLE I thank your worship. I shall make my master
glad with these tidings.

Exit

HOST Thou art clerkly, thou art clerkly, Sir John. Was
there a wise woman with thee? 55

SIR JOHN Ay, that there was, mine Host, one that hath
taught me more wit than ever I learned before in my
life. And I paid nothing for it, neither, but was paid for
my learning.

Enter Bardolph, [muddy]

BARDOLPH O Lord, sir, cozenage, mere cozenage! 60

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 them, in a slough of mire, and set spurs and away,
like three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses. 65

HOST They are gone but to meet the Duke, villain. Do not
say they be fled. Germans are honest men.

Enter Sir Hugh Evans

EVANS Where is mine Host?

HOST What is the matter, sir?

EVANS Have a care of your entertainments. There is a 70
friend of mine come to town tells me there is three

cozen Garmombles that has cozened all the hosts of Reading, of Maidenhead, of Colnbrook, of horses and money. I tell you for good will, look you. You are wise, and full of gibes and vlouting-stocks, and 'tis not convenient you should be cozened. Fare you well. 75

Exit

Enter Doctor Caius

CAIUS Vere is mine Host de Jarteer?

HOST Here, Master Doctor, in perplexity and doubtful dilemma.

CAIUS I cannot tell vat is dat, but it is tell-a me dat you make grand preparation for a duke de Jamany. By my trot, der is no duke that the court is know to come. I tell you for good will. Adieu. 80

Exit

HOST *(to Bardolph)* Hue and cry, villain, go! *(To Sir John)* Assist me, knight. I am undone. *(To Bardolph)* Fly, run, hue and cry, villain. I am undone. 85

Exeunt Host and Bardolph [severally]

SIR JOHN 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 crestfallen as a dried pear. I never prospered since I forswore myself at primero. Well, if my wind were but long enough, I would repent. 90 95

Enter Mistress Quickly

Now; whence come you?

MISTRESS QUICKLY From the two parties, forsooth.

SIR JOHN 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. 100

MISTRESS QUICKLY O Lord, sir, 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. 105

SIR JOHN 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 110
counterfeiting the action of an old woman, delivered
me, the knave constable had set me i'th' stocks, i'th'
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, 115
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.

SIR JOHN Come up into my chamber. 120
Exeunt