

# The Merry Wives of Windsor

## 1.3

*Enter Sir John Falstaff, Bardolph, Nim, Pistol, and Robin*

**SIR JOHN** Mine Host of the Garter!

*Enter the Host of the Garter*

**HOST** What says my bully rook? Speak scholarly and wisely.

**SIR JOHN** Truly, mine Host, I must turn away some of my followers. 5

**HOST** Discard, bully Hercules, cashier. Let them wag. Trot, trot.

**SIR JOHN** I sit at ten pounds a week.

**HOST** Thou'rt an emperor: Caesar, kaiser, and pheezer. I will entertain Bardolph. He shall draw, he shall tap. 10  
Said I well, bully Hector?

**SIR JOHN** Do so, good mine Host.

**HOST** I have spoke; let him follow. *(To Bardolph)* Let me see thee froth and lime. I am at a word: follow.

*Exit*

**SIR JOHN** Bardolph, follow him. A tapster is a good trade. 15  
An old cloak makes a new jerkin; a withered servingman a fresh tapster. Go; adieu.

**BARDOLPH** It is a life that I have desired. I will thrive.

*[Exit]*

**PISTOL**

O base Hungarian wight, wilt thou the spigot wield?

**NIM** He was gotten in drink; his mind is not heroic. Is 20  
not the humour conceited?

**SIR JOHN** I am glad I am so acquit of this tinderbox. His thefts were too open. His filching was like an unskilful singer: he kept not time.

**NIM** The good humour is to steal at a minute's rest. 25

**PISTOL**

`Convey' the wise it call. `Steal'? Foh, a fico for the phrase!

**SIR JOHN** Well, sirs, I am almost out at heels.

**PISTOL** Why then, let kibes ensue.

**SIR JOHN** There is no remedy: I must cony-catch, I must shift. 30

**PISTOL** Young ravens must have food.

**SIR JOHN** Which of you know Ford of this town?

**PISTOL** I ken the wight. He is of substance good.

**SIR JOHN** My honest lads, I will tell you what I am about.

**PISTOL** Two yards and more. 35

**SIR JOHN** 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 40 the action of her familiar style; and the hardest voice of her behaviour, to be Englished rightly, is 'I am Sir John Falstaff's'.

**PISTOL** He hath studied her well, and translated her will: out of honesty, into English. 45

**NIM** The anchor is deep. Will that humour pass?

**SIR JOHN** Now, the report goes, she has all the rule of her husband's purse; he hath a legion of angels.

**PISTOL**

As many devils entertain, and 'To her, boy!' say I.

**NIM** The humour rises; it is good. Humour me the angels! 50

**SIR JOHN** (*showing letters*) 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 oeillades; sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot, sometimes my portly belly. 55

**PISTOL**

Then did the sun on dunghill shine.

**NIM** I thank thee for that humour.

**SIR JOHN** 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 60 another letter to her. She bears the purse too. She is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. I will be cheaters 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. (*Giving a letter to Pistol*) Go bear thou this 65 letter to Mistress Page, (*giving a letter to Nim*) and thou

this to Mistress Ford. We will thrive, lads, we will thrive.

**PISTOL** *(returning the letter)*

Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy become,  
And by my side wear steel? Then Lucifer take all. 70

**NIM** *(returning the letter)* I will run no base humour. Here,  
take the humour-letter. I will keep the haviour of  
reputation.

**SIR JOHN** *(to Robin)*

Hold, sirrah. Bear you these letters tightly.  
Sail like my pinnacle to these golden shores. 75

*He gives Robin the letters*

Rogues, hence, avaunt! Vanish like hailstones! Go!  
Trudge, plod, away o'th' hoof, seek shelter, pack!  
Falstaff will learn the humour of the age:  
French thrift, you rogues±±myself and skirted page.

*Exeunt Sir John and Robin*

**PISTOL**

Let vultures gripe thy guts!±±for gourd and fullam  
holds, 80  
And high and low beguiles the rich and poor.  
Tester I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,  
Base Phrygian Turk!

**NIM**

I have operations which be humours of revenge.

**PISTOL**

Wilt thou revenge?

**NIM** By welkin and her stars! 85

**PISTOL**

With wit or steel?

**NIM** With both the humours, I.

I will discuss the humour of this love to Ford.

**PISTOL**

And I to Page shall eke unfold  
How Falstaff, varlet vile,  
His dove will prove, his gold will hold, 90  
And his soft couch defile.

**NIM** My humour shall not cool. I will incense Ford to  
deal with poison; I will possess him with yellowness;  
for this revolt of mine is dangerous. That is my true

humour.

95

**PISTOL**

Thou art the Mars of malcontents.

I second thee. Troop on.

*Exeunt*