

# The Merry Wives of Windsor

## 4.4

*Enter Master Page, Master Ford, Mistress Page,  
Mistress Ford, and Sir Hugh Evans*

**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**

Pardon me, wife. Henceforth do what thou wilt.

5

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

10

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.

15

**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.

**EVANS** 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.

20

**PAGE** So think I too.

**[MISTRESS] FORD**

Devise but how you'll use him when he comes,

25

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,  
Doth all the winter time at still midnight  
Walk round about an oak with great ragged horns; 30  
And there he blasts the trees, and takes the cattle,  
And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain  
In a most hideous and dreadful manner.  
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know  
The superstitious idle-headed eld 35  
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  
In deep of night to walk by this Herne's Oak.  
But what of this?

**MISTRESS FORD** Marry, this is our device: 40  
That Falstaff at that oak shall meet with us,  
Disguised like Herne, with huge horns on his head.

**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? 45

**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  
Like urchins, oafs, and fairies, green and white,  
With rounds of waxen tapers on their heads, 50  
And rattles in their hands. Upon a sudden,  
As Falstaff, she, and I are newly met,  
Let them from forth a saw-pit rush at once,  
With some diffuse and song. Upon their sight  
We two in great amazement will fly. 55  
Then let them all encircle him about,  
And, fairy-like, to pinch the unclean knight,  
And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,  
In their so sacred paths he dares to tread  
In shape profane.

**[MISTRESS] FORD** And till he tell the truth, 60  
Let the suppose and fairies pinch him sound,

And burn him with their tapers.

**MISTRESS PAGE** 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. 65

**EVANS** I will teach the children their behaviours, and I  
will be like a jackanapes also, to burn the knight with  
my taber.

**FORD**  
That will be excellent. I'll go buy them vizors.

**MISTRESS PAGE**  
My Nan shall be the Queen of all the Fairies, 70  
Finely attireÁd in a robe of white.

**PAGE**  
That silk will I go buy±± (*aside*) and in that tire  
Shall Master Slender steal my Nan away,  
And marry her at Eton. (*To Mistress Page*) Go send to  
Falstaff straight.

**FORD**  
Nay, I'll to him again in name of Brooke. 75  
He'll tell me all his purpose. Sure he'll come.

**MISTRESS PAGE**  
Fear not you that. (*To Page, Ford, and Evans*) Go get us  
properties  
And tricking for our fairies.

**EVANS** Let us about it. It is admirable pleasures, and fery  
honest knaveries.

*Exeunt Ford, Page, and Evans*

**MISTRESS PAGE** Go, Mistress Ford, 80  
Send quickly to Sir John, to know his mind.  
*Exit Mistress Ford*

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;  
And he my husband best of all affects. 85  
The Doctor is well moneyed, and his friends  
Potent at court. He, none but he, shall have her,  
Though twenty thousand worthier come to crave her.  
*Exit*