

## 2 Henry IV

### 1.2

*Enter Sir John Falstaff, [followed by] his Page  
bearing his sword and buckler*

**SIR JOHN** Sirrah, you giant, what says the doctor to my water?

**PAGE** He said, sir, the water itself was a good healthy water, but, for the party that owed it, he might have more diseases than he knew for. 5

**SIR JOHN** Men of all sorts take a pride to gird at me. The brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to invent anything that tends to laughter more than I invent, or is invented on me. I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men. I do 10 here walk before thee like a sow that hath o'erwhelmed all her litter but one. If the Prince put thee into my service for any other reason than to set me off, why then, I have no judgement. Thou whoreson mandrake, thou art fitter to be worn in my cap than to wait at 15 my heels. I was never manned with an agate till now; but I will set you neither in gold nor silver, but in vile apparel, and send you back again to your master for a jewel±±the juvenal the Prince your master, whose chin is not yet fledge. I will sooner have a beard grow 20 in the palm of my hand than he shall get one off his cheek; and yet he will not stick to say his face is a face-royal. God may finish it when he will; 'tis not a hair amiss yet. He may keep it still at a face-royal, for a barber shall never earn sixpence out of it. And yet 25 he'll be crowing as if he had writ man ever since his father was a bachelor. He may keep his own grace, but he's almost out of mine, I can assure him. What said Master Dumbleton about the satin for my short cloak and slops? 30

**PAGE** He said, sir, you should procure him better assurance than Bardolph. He would not take his bond and yours; he liked not the security.

**SIR JOHN** Let him be damned like the glutton! Pray God

his tongue be hotter! A whoreson Achitophel, a rascally 35  
yea-forsooth knave, to bear a gentleman in hand and  
then stand upon security! The whoreson smooth-pates  
do now wear nothing but high shoes and bunches of  
keys at their girdles; and if a man is through with  
them in honest taking-up, then they must stand upon 40  
security. I had as lief they would put ratsbane in my  
mouth as offer to stop it with security. I looked a should  
have sent me two-and-twenty yards of satin, as I am  
a true knight, and he sends me `security'! Well, he  
may sleep in security, for he hath the horn of 45  
abundance, and the lightness of his wife shines through  
it; and yet cannot he see, though he have his own  
lanthorn to light him. Where's Bardolph?

**PAGE** He's gone in Smithfield to buy your worship a  
horse. 50

**SIR JOHN** I bought him in Paul's, and he'll buy me a horse  
in Smithfield. An I could get me but a wife in the stews,  
I were manned, horsed, and wived.

*Enter the Lord Chief Justice and his Servant*

**PAGE** Sir, here comes the nobleman that committed the  
Prince for striking him about Bardolph. 55

**SIR JOHN** *[moving away]* Wait close; I will not see him.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** *(to his Servant)* What's he that goes  
there?

**SERVANT** Falstaff, an't please your lordship.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** He that was in question for the 60  
robbery?

**SERVANT** He, my lord; but he hath since done good service  
at Shrewsbury, and, as I hear, is now going with some  
charge to the Lord John of Lancaster.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** What, to York? Call him back again. 65

**SERVANT** Sir John Falstaff!

**SIR JOHN** Boy, tell him I am deaf.

**PAGE** *(to the Servant)* You must speak louder; my master  
is deaf.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** I am sure he is to the hearing of 70  
anything good. *(To the Servant)* Go pluck him by the  
elbow; I must speak with him.

**SERVANT** Sir John!

**SIR JOHN** What, a young knave and begging! Is there not wars? Is there not employment? Doth not the King 75  
lack subjects? Do not the rebels want soldiers? Though  
it be a shame to be on any side but one, it is worse  
shame to beg than to be on the worst side, were it  
worse than the name of rebellion can tell how to make  
it. 80

**SERVANT** You mistake me, sir.

**SIR JOHN** Why, sir, did I say you were an honest man?  
Setting my knighthood and my soldiership aside, I had  
lied in my throat if I had said so.

**SERVANT** I pray you, sir, then set your knighthood and 85  
your soldiership aside, and give me leave to tell you  
you lie in your throat if you say I am any other than  
an honest man.

**SIR JOHN** I give thee leave to tell me so? I lay aside that  
which grows to me? If thou gettest any leave of me, 90  
hang me. If thou takest leave, thou wert better be  
hanged. You hunt counter. Hence, avaunt!

**SERVANT** Sir, my lord would speak with you.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Sir John Falstaff, a word with you.

**SIR JOHN** My good lord! God give your lordship good time 95  
of day. I am glad to see your lordship abroad. I heard  
say your lordship was sick. I hope your lordship goes  
abroad by advice. Your lordship, though not clean past  
your youth, have yet some smack of age in you, some  
relish of the saltiness of time in you; and I most humbly 100  
beseech your lordship to have a reverent care of your  
health.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Sir John, I sent for you before your  
expedition to Shrewsbury.

**SIR JOHN** An't please your lordship, I hear his majesty is 105  
returned with some discomfort from Wales.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** I talk not of his majesty. You would  
not come when I sent for you.

**SIR JOHN** And I hear, moreover, his highness is fallen into  
this same whoreson apoplexy. 110

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Well, God mend him! I pray you, let  
me speak with you.

**SIR JOHN** This apoplexy is, as I take it, a kind of lethargy,

an't please your lordship, a kind of sleeping in the  
blood, a whoreson tingling. 115

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** What tell you me of it? Be it as it is.

**SIR JOHN** It hath it original from much grief, from study,  
and perturbation of the brain. I have read the cause of  
his effects in Galen. It is a kind of deafness.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** I think you are fallen into the disease, 120  
for you hear not what I say to you.

**SIR JOHN** Very well, my lord, very well. Rather, an't please  
you, it is the disease of not listening, the malady of not  
marking, that I am troubled withal.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** To punish you by the heels would 125  
amend the attention of your ears, and I care not if I  
do become your physician.

**SIR JOHN** I am as poor as Job, my lord, but not so patient.  
Your lordship may minister the potion of imprisonment  
to me in respect of poverty; but how I should be your 130  
patient to follow your prescriptions, the wise may make  
some dram of a scruple, or indeed a scruple itself.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** I sent for you, when there were matters  
against you for your life, to come speak with me.

**SIR JOHN** As I was then advised by my learned counsel 135  
in the laws of this land-service, I did not come.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Well, the truth is, Sir John, you live  
in great infamy.

**SIR JOHN** He that buckles himself in my belt cannot live  
in less. 140

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Your means are very slender, and  
your waste is great.

**SIR JOHN** I would it were otherwise; I would my means  
were greater and my waist slenderer.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** You have misled the youthful Prince. 145

**SIR JOHN** The young Prince hath misled me. I am the  
fellow with the great belly, and he my dog.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Well, I am loath to gall a new-healed  
wound. Your day's service at Shrewsbury hath a little  
gilded over your night's exploit on Gads Hill. You may 150  
thank th'unquiet time for your quiet o'erposting that  
action.

**SIR JOHN** My lord±±

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** But since all is well, keep it so. Wake  
not a sleeping wolf. 155

**SIR JOHN** To wake a wolf is as bad as smell a fox.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** What! You are as a candle, the better  
part burnt out.

**SIR JOHN** A wassail candle, my lord, all tallow±±if I did  
say of wax, my growth would approve the truth. 160

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** There is not a white hair in your face  
but should have his effect of gravity.

**SIR JOHN** His effect of gravy, gravy, gravy.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** You follow the young Prince up and  
down like his ill angel. 165

**SIR JOHN** Not so, my lord; your ill angel is light, but I  
hope he that looks upon me will take me without  
weighing. And yet in some respects, I grant, I cannot  
go. I cannot tell, virtue is of so little regard in these  
costermongers' times that true valour is turned 170  
bearherd; pregnancy is made a tapster, and his quick  
wit wasted in giving reckonings; all the other gifts  
appertinent to man, as the malice of this age shapes  
them, are not worth a gooseberry. You that are old  
consider not the capacities of us that are young. You 175  
do measure the heat of our livers with the bitterness  
of your galls. And we that are in the vanguard of our  
youth, I must confess, are wags too.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Do you set down your name in the  
scroll of youth, that are written down old with all the 180  
characters of age? Have you not a moist eye, a dry  
hand, a yellow cheek, a white beard, a decreasing leg,  
an increasing belly? Is not your voice broken, your  
wind short, your chin double, your wit single, and  
every part about you blasted with antiquity? And will 185  
you yet call yourself young? Fie, fie, fie, Sir John!

**SIR JOHN** My lord, I was born about three of the clock in  
the afternoon with a white head, and something a  
round belly. For my voice, I have lost it with hallowing  
and singing of anthems. To approve my youth further, 190  
I will not. The truth is, I am only old in judgement  
and understanding; and he that will caper with me for  
a thousand marks, let him lend me the money, and

have at him! For the box of th'ear that the Prince gave  
you, he gave it like a rude prince, and you took it like 195  
a sensible lord. I have checked him for it, and the  
young lion repents±± [aside] marry, not in ashes and  
sackcloth,  
but in new silk and old sack.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Well, God send the Prince a better 200  
companion!

**SIR JOHN** God send the companion a better prince! I  
cannot rid my hands of him.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Well, the King hath severed you and  
Prince Harry. I hear you are going with Lord John of 205  
Lancaster against the Archbishop and the Earl of  
Northumberland.

**SIR JOHN** Yea, I thank your pretty sweet wit for it. But  
look you pray, all you that kiss my lady Peace at home,  
that our armies join not in a hot day; for, by the Lord, 210  
I take but two shirts out with me, and I mean not to  
sweat extraordinarily. If it be a hot day and I brandish  
anything but my bottle, would I might never spit white  
again. There is not a dangerous action can peep out  
his head but I am thrust upon it. Well, I cannot last 215  
ever. But it was alway yet the trick of our English  
nation, if they have a good thing, to make it too  
common. If ye will needs say I am an old man, you  
should give me rest. I would to God my name were not  
so terrible to the enemy as it is. I were better to be 220  
eaten to death with a rust than to be scoured to nothing  
with perpetual motion.

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Well, be honest, be honest, and God  
bless your expedition.

**SIR JOHN** Will your lordship lend me a thousand pound 225  
to furnish me forth?

**LORD CHIEF JUSTICE** Not a penny, not a penny. You are  
too impatient to bear crosses. Fare you well. Commend  
me to my cousin Westmorland.

*Exeunt Lord Chief Justice and his Servant*

**SIR JOHN** If I do, fillip me with a three-man beetle. A man 230  
can no more separate age and covetousness than a can  
part young limbs and lechery; but the gout galls the

one and the pox pinches the other, and so both the degrees prevent my curses. Boy!

PAGE Sir. 235

SIR JOHN What money is in my purse?

PAGE Seven groats and two pence.

SIR JOHN I can get no remedy against this consumption of the purse. Borrowing only lingers and lingers it out, but the disease is incurable. (*Giving letters*) Go bear this 240 letter to my lord of Lancaster; this to the Prince; this to the Earl of Westmorland; and this to old Mistress Ursula, whom I have weekly sworn to marry since I perceived the first white hair of my chin. About it. You know where to find me. 245

[Exit Page]

A pox of this gout!±±or a gout of this pox!±±for the one or the other plays the rogue with my great toe. 'Tis no matter if I do halt; I have the wars for my colour, and my pension shall seem the more reasonable. A good wit will make use of anything. I will turn 250 diseases to commodity.

Exit