

# 1 Henry VI

## 2.3

*Enter the Countess of Auvergne and her Porter*

**COUNTESS**

Porter, remember what I gave in charge,  
And when you have done so, bring the keys to me.

**PORTER** Madam, I will.

*Exit*

**COUNTESS**

The plot is laid. If all things fall out right,  
I shall as famous be by this exploit 5  
As Scythian Tomyris by Cyrus' death.  
Great is the rumour of this dreadful knight,  
And his achievements of no less account.  
Fain would mine eyes be witness with mine ears,  
To give their censure of these rare reports. 10

*Enter Messenger and Lord Talbot*

**MESSENGER**

Madam, according as your ladyship desired,  
By message craved, so is Lord Talbot come.

**COUNTESS**

And he is welcome. What, is this the man?

**MESSENGER**

Madam, it is.

**COUNTESS** Is this the scourge of France?

Is this the Talbot, so much feared abroad 15

That with his name the mothers still their babes?

I see report is fabulous and false.

I thought I should have seen some Hercules,

A second Hector, for his grim aspect

And large proportion of his strong-knit limbs. 20

Alas, this is a child, a seely dwarf.

It cannot be this weak and writhled shrimp

Should strike such terror to his enemies.

**TALBOT**

Madam, I have been bold to trouble you.

But since your ladyship is not at leisure, 25

I'll sort some other time to visit you.

*He is going*

**COUNTESS** *(to Messenger)*

What means he now? Go ask him whither he goes.

**MESSENGER**

Stay, my Lord Talbot, for my lady craves  
To know the cause of your abrupt departure.

**TALBOT**

Marry, for that she's in a wrong belief, 30  
I go to certify her Talbot's here.

*Enter Porter with keys*

**COUNTESS**

If thou be he, then art thou prisoner.

**TALBOT**

Prisoner? To whom?

**COUNTESS**

To me, bloodthirsty lord;  
And for that cause I trained thee to my house.  
Long time thy shadow hath been thrall to me, 35  
For in my gallery thy picture hangs;  
But now the substance shall endure the like,  
And I will chain these legs and arms of thine  
That hast by tyranny these many years  
Wasted our country, slain our citizens, 40  
And sent our sons and husbands captive±±

**TALBOT** Ha, ha, ha!

**COUNTESS**

Laughest thou, wretch? Thy mirth shall turn to  
moan.

**TALBOT**

I laugh to see your ladyship so fond  
To think that you have aught but Talbot's shadow 45  
Whereon to practise your severity.

**COUNTESS** Why? Art not thou the man?

**TALBOT** I am indeed.

**COUNTESS** Then have I substance too.

**TALBOT**

No, no, I am but shadow of myself. 50  
You are deceived; my substance is not here.  
For what you see is but the smallest part  
And least proportion of humanity.  
I tell you, madam, were the whole frame here,  
It is of such a spacious lofty pitch 55  
Your roof were not sufficient to contain't.

**COUNTESS**

This is a riddling merchant for the nonce.  
He will be here, and yet he is not here.  
How can these contrarieties agree?

**TALBOT**

That will I show you presently. 60  
*He winds his horn. Within, drums strike up; a peal  
of ordnance. Enter English soldiers*

How say you, madam? Are you now persuaded  
That Talbot is but shadow of himself?  
These are his substance, sinews, arms, and strength,  
With which he yoketh your rebellious necks,  
Razeth your cities and subverts your towns, 65  
And in a moment makes them desolate.

**COUNTESS**

Victorious Talbot, pardon my abuse.  
I find thou art no less than fame hath bruited,  
And more than may be gathered by thy shape.  
Let my presumption not provoke thy wrath, 70  
For I am sorry that with reverence  
I did not entertain thee as thou art.

**TALBOT**

Be not dismayed, fair lady, nor misconster  
The mind of Talbot, as you did mistake  
The outward composition of his body. 75  
What you have done hath not offended me;  
Nor other satisfaction do I crave  
But only, with your patience, that we may  
Taste of your wine and see what cates you have:  
For soldiers' stomachs always serve them well. 80

**COUNTESS**

With all my heart; and think me honoureÁd  
To feast so great a warrior in my house.  
*Exeunt*