

Mrs. Ford. Why, alas! what's the matter?

Mrs. Page. Your husband's coming hither, woman, with all the officers in *Windsor*, to search for a gentleman that, he says, is here now in the house, by your consent, to take an ill advantage of his absence. You are undone.

Mrs. Ford. 'Tis not so, I hope.

Mrs. Page. Pray heav'n it be not so that you have such a man here; but 'tis most certain, your husband's coming, with half *Windsor* at his heels, to search for such a one. I come before to tell you: if you know yourself clear, why, I am glad of it; but if you have a friend here, convey, convey him out. Be not amaz'd, call all your senses to you, defend your reputation, or bid farewell to your good life for ever.

Mrs. Ford. What shall I do? there is a gentleman, my dear friend; and I fear not mine own shame so much as his peril. I had rather than a thousand pound he were out of the house.

Mrs. Page. For shame! never stand *you had rather*, and *you had rather*; your husband's here at hand, bethink you of some conveyance: in the house you cannot hide him. O, how have you deceiv'd me! look, here is a basket; if he be of any reasonable stature, he may creep in here; and throw foul linen upon him, as if it were going to bucking: or, it is whiting time, send him by your two men to *Datchet*-mead.

Mrs. Ford. He's too big to go in there: what shall I do?

*Re-enter Falstaff.*

Fal. Let me see't, let me see't, o let me see't! I'll in, I'll in; follow your friend's counsel; I'll in.

Mrs. Page. What, sir *John Falstaff*? are these your letters, knight?

Fal. I love thee; help me away; let me creep in here: I'll never — [*He goes into the basket, they cover him with foul linen.*]

Mrs. Page. Help to cover your master, boy: call your men, mistress Ford. You dissembling knight!

Mrs. Ford. What, *John*, *Robert*, *John*! go, take up these cloths here, quickly. Where's the cowl-staff? look how you drumble: carry them to the laundress in *Datchet*-mead; quickly, come.

SCENE