

# THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR: SUMMARY

**A**t the start of our play, we are taken back one day, when Mistress Page receives a letter from the knight Falstaff, confessing his passion for her. However, Mistress Page quickly discovers that her old friend, Mistress Ford, has received an identical letter from the same man. And from there, we flash back yet again, this time to two days prior to this discovery.

Windsor is a seemingly regular town with regular people doing regular jobs and living their regular lives. The judge of the town, John Shallow, Esq., seeks the hand of Master Page's daughter, Anne, for his nephew, the not-very-bright Abraham Slender. He teams up with the parson of the town, Hugh Evans, to try to convince not only Anne and her father, but also Slender himself, that this would be a beneficial and fortuitous match.

A not-so-regular knight, Sir John Falstaff, comes to Windsor hauling his ragtag crew of mischief-makers to stir up the town. Falstaff, realizing that he's going to need more money, decides to woo Mistress Page and Mistress Ford so that he can then blackmail them and reap financial benefit from their husband's purses. The knight sets to work on his scheme. He writes the two women love letters and attempts to have two of his motley crew deliver them, but the men—Pistol and Nym—refuse. Falstaff sends the letters another way and kick Pistol and Nym out of their room in retribution. Sensing fun of their own to be had, Pistol and Nym reveal Falstaff's plot to the husbands, Page and Ford.

Page is uninterested in the possibility of his wife's infidelity, but Master Ford becomes obsessively jealous. To test his wife's faithfulness, Ford decides he will disguise himself as Master Brook, and pay Falstaff to seduce his wife.

The two women, meanwhile, use a local serving woman, Mistress Quickly, as their messenger, and set up meetings with Falstaff when their husbands will not be at home.

Ford (in disguise as Master Brook) talks to Falstaff about seducing his wife. "Brook" tells the knight that he has long

admired and lusted after Mistress Ford, and offers Falstaff money and booze if Falstaff manages to sleep with her. Falstaff, having just received an invitation from Mistress Ford to visit her house, readily strikes the deal with Brook and sets off to Ford's house.

Justice Shallow and Parson Evans sit Slender down to make sure that he understands what his responsibilities would be in marrying Anne Page. Slender says that he will marry her—although he cannot promise that they will love each other.

But the two wives have concocted their own plans of revenge on the knight, determining that they will trick the knight into hiding in a laundry basket that would be sent out and thrown into a muddy ditch. The trap the two wives set for Falstaff goes off without a hitch, and he is tricked into the laundry, or 'buck,' basket, and manages to get out of the house just as Ford comes in. Ford and his friends search the house high and low for the knight but are unable to discover him. Thinking the knight must have been speaking falsehoods, Ford concedes defeat. The wives, however, are not done, and set yet another trap for Falstaff to come meet with them.



When Ford (still in disguise) meets with Falstaff to figure out why he lied about meeting his wife, Falstaff tells “Brook” about his escape in the buck basket, and the new appointment he has set for later that morning.

**T**his time, when the knight visits Mistress Ford, Mistress Page tells them that the husbands are right in front of the house and that the only way they can get Falstaff safely away is to dress the knight as a witch. Ford enters to find that his house is empty of any errant knight yet again. However, when he sees a witch in his home, he promptly beats the stuffing out of “her” (Falstaff in disguise).

The wives quickly realize that the husbands are somehow aware of Falstaff’s plans, and decide to let them in on what their own plans were. They then set the biggest trap yet. Mistress Quickly returns and convinces Falstaff to meet Mistress Ford and Mistress Page at a large oak tree dressed as Herne the Hunter, a figure from local mythology.

Justice Shallow attempts to convince Anne Page that his nephew, Slender, loves her. Anne Page begs her father not to marry her to Slender and convinces her father that she loves a man called Fenton and that Fenton truly loves her.

At the oak tree, Falstaff, dressed in antlers, is beset by what he thinks are fairies (actually local children in costume) and becomes terrified, a humiliating act witnessed by much of the town. The wives reveal the truth, their husbands repent their jealousies, and Falstaff, in his efforts to fool the people of the town, ends up the biggest fool of all.

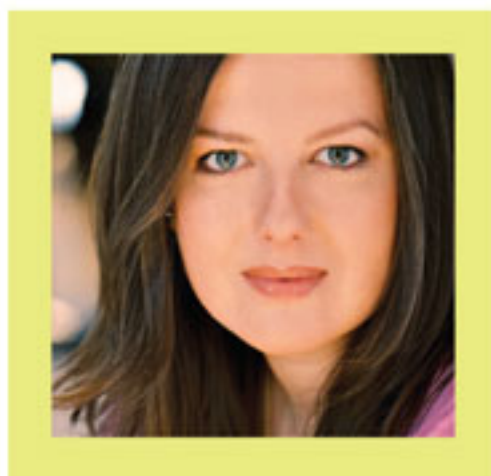
## CHARACTERS



**Jason O'Connell**



**Nicole Lewis**



**Zuzanna Szadkowski**

■ **Falstaff (Jason):** a knight from London staying at the Garter Inn. To make some money, he attempts to woo Mistresses Page and Ford so that he can blackmail their husbands.

■ **Mistress Ford (Nicole):** wife of Ford. Schemes a plot with Mistress Page against Falstaff to punish him for writing them love letters.

■ **Mistress Page (Zuzanna):** wife of Page; mother to Anne Page. Receives a letter from Falstaff and schemes with Mistress Ford to avenge their honor.

■ ■ ■ **Shallow (All):** uncle to Abraham Slender. Justice of the Peace in the town who wants his nephew married to the richest girl in town, Anne Page.

■ **Hugh Evans (Jason):** Parson who schemes with Justice Shallow to get Slender betrothed to Anne Page.

■ **Slender (Nicole):** nephew to Shallow. Top draft pick for Anne Page, although he only seem interested in the marriage for the dowry and out of duty.

■ ■ **Page (Jason and Nicole):** husband of Mistress Page. Believes Ford’s jealousy is out of control and wants his daughter to marry Abraham Slender, son of the Justice of the Peace.

■ **Anne Page (Zuzanna):** daughter of Page and Mistress Page. She is subject to whomever her father desires her to marry, however, she wishes to marry Fenton.

■ **Simple (Jason):** Slender’s servant

■ ■ **Pistol & Nym (Nicole and Zuzanna):** Falstaff’s cronies

■ **Ford (Zuzanna):** husband to Mistress Ford. When he hears of Falstaff’s plan to court his wife, he becomes jealous and pays Falstaff to woo his wife in order to prove she is an adulteress.

■ **Host of the Garter Inn (Jason):** owner of the inn where Falstaff is staying.

■ **Mistress Quickly (Nicole):** an errand maid of the town who acts as a go-between for Falstaff and the two wives.

■ **Robin (Jason):** the servant of Falstaff

■ ■ **John & Robert (Jason and Zuzanna):** servants of Mistress Ford

■ **Fenton (Jason):** suitor for Anne page. A gentleman-born young man with a wild and scandalous past. Page does not like him as a husband for her daughter, Anne.