

The Wandering Scholar

Louis, a country farmer, is lounging around when his wife, Alison, chastises him and sends him off to the market to buy food. Reluctantly he leaves, and Alison reveals that she needs Louis out the way so she can welcome Father Philippe to their home. She's prepared quite the spread for his arrival, with perhaps more than food and drink on the menu ... Father Philippe arrives and soon sets off up the ladder to the attic; but he and Alison are interrupted by an unexpected visitor. A poor scholar, Pierre, is passing by and looking for food in return for a song. Philippe wants him gone, but Alison is happy for him to stay and sing. Pierre sings a solo song about how he's come to be a poor wandering scholar, and Alison is rather taken by him. Philippe, however, is unmoved, and chases Pierre out of the house! Nervous of Louis returning, they go again to climb the ladder; but Father Philippe is a large man, and climbing it isn't easy ... Again they are interrupted as they hear a noise – Louis has already returned! They try to disguise evidence that Philippe has been in the house, and he hides. Louis enters, and has brought Pierre back with him! Pierre – looking to take his revenge on Philippe and Alison – persuades Louis to let him sing them a song. During this new song, however, Pierre reveals the various bits of food and drink Alison has been hiding, before eventually revealing the hiding place of Father Philippe! As all hell breaks loose, Pierre is left on his own; finally able to enjoy the food and drink to himself ...

Savitri

Satyavan, a woodman, comes home one evening to his wife, Savitri, and hears a stranger moving in the forest. Satyavan raises his axe, but the strength goes from his arms and he falls to the ground, for the stranger is Death. Instead of cursing the intruder, Savitri comes forward and welcomes him into their home. Death is so much impressed by her greeting that he promises her anything she desires for herself, but she must ask nothing for Satyavan. Savitri makes a passionate appeal for life in its fullness, and when Death has granted her request she explains that life in its fullness would be impossible without Satyavan. Death sees that he has been defeated and walks away into the forest. For even Death is an illusion. When Satyavan wakes, he finds Savitri's arms round him, and she tells him that one of the Holy Ones has visited them and blessed them.

At the Boar's Head

At the Boar's Head tavern, notorious drunkard, womaniser, and charlatan Sir John Falstaff is drinking with his regular associates Bardolph, Peto and Gadshill. Sir John is angry at the state of the world (though, of course, in his opinion he is one of its few redeeming characters remaining). Prince Hal (son of the King) arrives, and he and Falstaff begin their usual game of hurling insults at each other. Falstaff is in a particularly combative mood, and when Hal asks him what is wrong, he replies that he, Bardolph, Peto and Gadshill have all been attacked by "a hundred" men whilst trying to steal £1,000. The four of them, however, struggle to keep their story straight in front of Prince Hal – the numbers of attackers keep changing, Falstaff says it was pitch black but knows

what the attackers were wearing ... Eventually, Prince Hal reveals that it was he and one other person (Peto) who attacked the four of them in jest. Falstaff pretends that he knew all along, and only didn't fight back so he couldn't be convicted of killing a Prince (!).

The Hostess enters and tells them that a visitor from the King's court has come to see them. Falstaff leaves to send the visitor on his way, and Prince Hal is left alone. He reveals that his relationship with Falstaff and others is more a game than a true friendship, and realises that to fulfil his duty he will need to soon leave them all behind. The others return, and Falstaff reports that the man at the door was Sir John Bracy, with orders for Hal to return to his father in the morning. A rebellion is brewing against the King. Hal brushes it off, and proposes a game with Falstaff, with Sir John playing the King to prepare Hal for the conversation he will have to have with his father the next day. Falstaff greatly entertains everyone with his impression of the King, and supposes that – whilst he is disappointed in his son's actions – he does approve of one of his friends; unsurprisingly, Sir John himself. Hal makes Falstaff switch roles, and he takes on the character of his father. Though only play acting, there is a palpable tension when Prince Hal (as the King) tells Falstaff that soon he will shake him off, and banish him for good ...

Doll Tearsheet rushes in. She and Falstaff appear to have a long and complicated history; however she is concerned that he will soon be sent off to war, again. Hal and Poin develop a plan to disguise themselves to trick Falstaff into revealing his true self. There appears to be true affection between Doll and Falstaff, and Poin and Hal put their plan into action – Poin waits on Falstaff, whilst the Prince (in disguise) performs a song. The lyrics tell of how all things must come to an end, whilst Falstaff and Doll interject with a song about the newly crowned King Arthur going into battle with his trusty companion, Lancelot.

Bardolph returns with news that the King is in Westminster, and Hal must leave immediately. Hal (casting off his disguise) announces that he will depart, and shrugs off Falstaff. Soldiers (outside) can be heard singing a war song in preparation. The group inside continue the song, as Hal and Poin leave. Falstaff commends Hal's character, before reaching again for a drink ...

Pistol arrives outside, calling for Falstaff; Doll clearly does not want him to come in, and neither does the Hostess. Pistol, however, is Falstaff's "ancient" (ensign) and he is eventually let in. Upon entering, however, Doll and Hostess are combative, and it is not long until insults start being hurled around, and everyone else gets involved! Peto, Gadshill and Bardolph eventually throw Pistol out, but there are many men outside going from tavern to tavern looking for Falstaff; he cannot wait it out in the Boar's Head eternally. He says his goodbyes to Doll, and she and the Hostess mourn his leaving; however Bardolph returns, asking for Doll to come to his master, and she runs after Falstaff one last time ...