

Shake in their fear and with pale policy  
 Seek to divert the English purposes.  
 O England! model to thy inward greatness,  
 Like little body with a mighty heart,  
 What mightst thou do, that honour would thee do,  
 Were all thy children kind and natural!  
 But see thy fault! France hath in thee found out  
 A nest of hollow bosoms, which he fills  
 With treacherous crowns; and three corrupted men,  
 One, Richard Earl of Cambridge, and the second,  
 Henry Lord Scroop of Masham, and the third,  
 Sir Thomas Grey, knight, of Northumberland,  
 Have, for the guilt of France, – O guilt indeed!  
 Confirm'd conspiracy with fearful France;  
 And by their hands this grace of kings must die,  
 If hell and treason hold their promises,  
 Ere he take ship for France, and in Southampton.  
 Linger your patience on; and we'll digest  
 The abuse of distance; force a play:  
 The sum is paid; the traitors are agreed;  
 The king is set from London; and the scene  
 Is now transported, gentles, to Southampton;  
 There is the playhouse now, there must you sit:  
 And thence to France shall we convey you safe,  
 And bring you back, charming the narrow seas  
 To give you gentle pass; for, if we may,  
 We'll not offend one stomach with our play.  
 But till the King come forth, and not till then,  
 Unto Southampton do we shift our scene.

Exit

ACT II · SCENE I

Enter Corporal Nim and Lieutenant Bardolph

BARDOLPH Well met, Corporal Nim.  
 NIM Good morrow, Lieutenant Bardolph.  
 BARDOLPH What, are Ensign° Pistol and you friends yet?  
 NIM For my part, I care not. I say little, but what time shall  
 serve,° there shall be smiles – but that shall be as it may.°  
 I dare not fight,° but I will wink° and hold out mine

Act II, Scene 1 This and 2.3 are often called Eastcheap scenes, from the location of the tavern in 1 *Henry IV*; in fact both seem to be unlocalized street scenes. s.d. **Nim**] Editors usually spell Nym, but F has both spellings, and the word *nim* (= thief, thieve), though now archaic, survived until early in the twentieth century. Nim is usually portrayed as shaggy-haired (in deference to Pistol's repeated descriptions of him as a hairy dog), and small (as he is called a lap-dog, l. 39, and possibly a tick, l. 28). **Lieutenant**] At 3.2.2 Nim calls Bardolph *corporal*, the rank he held in 2 *Henry IV*. **Ensign**] According to the *OED*, F's *ancient* is 'a corruption of *ensign*, early forms of which, like *ensyne*, *enseyne*, were confused

with *ancien*, *ancyen*, the contemporary forms of *ancient*, with which they thus became formally identified from the 16th to the 18th c.' 4–5 **when time shall serve**] Though *OED* sanctions this use of *shall* in temporal clauses denoting a future contingency' (10c), it also remarks that 'where no ambiguity results ... the present tense is commonly used for the future, and ... the use of *shall*, when not required for clearness, is apt to sound pedantic'. 5 **that shall be as it may**] proverbial 6 **I dare not fight**] This is said with irony. **wink**] close both eyes

iron.° It is a simple one, but what though?° It will toast  
 cheese,° and it will endure cold, as another man's sword  
 will – and there's an end.  
 BARDOLPH I will bestow a breakfast to male you friends,  
 and we'll be all three sworn brothers° to France. Let't be  
 so, good Corporal Nim.  
 NIM Faith, I will live so long as I may, that's the certain of  
 it, and when I cannot live any longer, I will do as I may.°  
 That is my rest,° that is the rendezvous° of it.  
 BARDOLPH It is certain, corporal, that he is married to Nell  
 Quickly, and certainly she did you wrong, for you were  
 troth-plight° to her.  
 NIM I cannot tell. Things must be as they may. Men may  
 sleep, and they may have their throats about them at  
 that time, and some say knives have edges. It must be as  
 it may. Patience be a tired mare, yet she will plod. There  
 must be conclusions. Well, I cannot tell.  
 Enter Ensign Pistol° and Hostess Quickly  
 BARDOLPH Good morrow, Ensign Pistol.° [To Nim] Here  
 comes Ensign Pistol and his wife. Good corporal, be  
 patient here.  
 NIM How now, mine host° Pistol?  
 PISTOL  
 Base tick,° call'st thou me host? Now by Gad's lugs°  
 I swear I scorn the term. Nor shall Nell keep lodgers.  
 HOSTESS No, by my troth, not long, for we cannot lodge  
 and board a dozen or fourteen gentlewomen that live  
 honestly° by the prick° of their needles, but it will be  
 thought we keep a bawdy-house straight.  
 Nim draws his sword  
 Oh well-a-day. Lady!° If he be not hewn° now, we shall

7 **iron**] sword **what though**] what of that 7–8 **toast cheese**] Compare *K. John*, 4.3.99, 'I'll so maul you and your toasting iron'. The modern equivalent would probably be 'toast marshmallows'. 11 **sworn brothers**] 'companions in arms who took an oath according to the rules of chivalry to share each other's goods and bad fortunes' (*OED*). 14 **when ... may**] Proverbial: 'Men must do as they may (can), not as they would'. **do as I may**] A modern stage tradition, that Nim stutters, has the merit of bringing out the absurdity of this line, the stutter on *do* giving the audience time to anticipate the obvious and logical conclusion *die*, which Nim then avoids. 15 **rest**] last resolve **rendezvous**] a retreat, a refuge; a sense first recorded at 1 *Henry IV*, 4.1.57. 18 **troth-plight**] betrothed (a more binding contract than the modern engagement) s.d. **Pistol**] The name probably alludes to Basilisco, a cowardly braggart in Kyd's *Solyman and Perseda* (1589–92); a basilisk was

a great cannon. Contemporary pistols were notoriously inaccurate but very noisy. For Pistol in the theatre, see Introduction, pp. 64–5. 2.4 **good morrow, Ensign Pistol**] In F, Bardolph sees Pistol coming, urges Nim to be patient, then addresses Pistol. In Q Bardolph sees Pistol, shouts a greeting to him, then while Pistol approaches, urges Nim to be patient; but Nim immediately greets Pistol in a provocative manner. 2.7 **host**] Corporal Nim addresses his superior officer not as 'Ensign' (as Bardolph has done twice in the immediately preceding speech) but as 'inn-keeper'. *Host* could also imply 'pimp'. 2.8 **tick**] Most editors have respelled *tike*, glossing 'small dog'. **Gad's lugs**] God's ears 3.1 **honestly**] (a) decently (b) chastely 3.2 **prick**] unwittingly obscene 3.4 **Lady**] '(By Our) Lady', a mild oath **hewn**] cut down

see wilful adultery° and murder committed.  
 Pistol draws his sword  
 BARDOLPH Good Lieutenant, good corporal, offer nothing here.  
 NIM Pish.°  
 PISTOL Pish for thee, Iceland dog.° Thou prick-eared cur of Iceland.  
 HOSTESS Good Corporal Nim, show thy valour, and put up your sword.  
 They sheathe their swords  
 NIM Will you shog off?° I will have you *solus*.°  
 PISTOL  
 'Solus', egregious dog? O viper vile!  
 The *solus* in thy most marvellous face,  
 The *solus* in thy teeth, and in thy throat,  
 And in thy hateful lungs, yea, in thy maw° pardie –  
 And which is worse, within thy nasty mouth.  
 I do retort the *solus* in thy bowels,  
 For I can take, and Pistol's cock is up,  
 And flashing fire will follow.  
 NIM I am not Barbason,° you cannot conjure me. I have an humour to knock you indifferently well. If you grow foul° with me, Pistol, I will scour you with my rapier, as I may, in fair terms. If you would walk off, I would pick your guts a little, in good terms, as I may, and that's the humour of it.  
 PISTOL  
 O braggart vile, and damnèd furious wight!  
 The grave doth gape, and doting death is near.  
 Therefore ex-hale.°  
 They draw their swords°  
 BARDOLPH Hear me what I say.  
 He draws his sword  
 He that strikes the first stroke, I'll run him up to the hilts, as I am a soldier.  
 3.5 **wilful adultery**] She probably means 'unwilling adultery' (rape) or 'intentional adultery' (on Nim's part). Editors assume she malaprops a neologism ('assaultery') – which seems uncommunicable. 3.8 **Pish**] a contemptuous exclamation used in vulgar contexts; probably accompanied by an insulting gesture 3.9 **Iceland dog**] lap-dog (with an implicit sexual sense). 4.2 **shog off**] go away, move along. The word's first occurrence in this sense; it survives in Midland dialect, and was probably always a dialect usage. **solus**] alone (theatre Latin) 4.3 **egregious**] an affected word, used only by Pistol, Paroles, and Posthumous when ranting. 4.6 **maw**] stomach 5.1 **Barbason**] listed in *Merry Wives* among 'the names of fiends', but otherwise unknown. Scot names among principle devils 'Marbas, *alias* Barbass', who 'at the commandment of

PISTOL  
 A oath of mickle° might, and fury shall abate.  
 They sheathe their swords  
 [To Nim] Give me thy fist,° thy forefoot° give to me give. 63  
 Thy spirits are most tall.°  
 NIM I will cut his throat one time or another, in fair terms,  
 that's the humour of it.  
 PISTOL  
 Couple a gorge,°  
 That is the word. I thee defy again. 70  
 O hound of Crete,° think'st thou my spouse to get?  
 No, to the spital° go.  
 And from the powd'ring tub of infamy  
 Fetch forth the lazar kite of Cressid's kind,°  
 Doll Tearsheet° she by name, and her espouse. 75  
 I have, and I will hold, the quondam Quickly  
 For the only she, and – *pauca*,° there's enough.  
 Go to.  
 Enter the Boy  
 BOY Mine host Pistol, you must come to my master, and  
 you, hostess: he is very sick, and would to bed. Good 80  
 Bardolph, put thy face between his sheets, and do the  
 office of a warming-pan. Faith, he's very ill.  
 BARDOLPH Away, you rogue!  
 HOSTESS By my troth, he'll yield the crow a pudding one of  
 these days. The king has killed his heart. Good husband, 85  
 come home presently.  
 Exeunt Hostess and Boy  
 BARDOLPH Come, shall I make you two friends? We must  
 to France together: why the devil should we keep knives  
 to cut one another's throats?  
 PISTOL Let floods o'erswell, and fiends for food howl on! 90  
 NIM You'll pay me the eight shillings I won of you at  
 betting?  
 PISTOL Base is the slave that pays.  
 NIM That now I will have: that's the humour of it.  
 PISTOL As manhood shall compound: push home. 95  
 They draw  
 BARDOLPH By this sword, he that makes the first thrust,  
 I'll kill him; by this sword, I will.  
 PISTOL Sword is an oath, and oaths must have their  
 course.  
 BARDOLPH Corporal Nim, an thou wilt be friends, be friends: 100  
 an thou wilt not, why, then, be enemies with me too.  
 Prithee, put up.  
 NIM I shall have my eight shillings I won of you at  
 betting?  
 PISTOL 105  
 A noble shalt thou have, and present pay;  
 And liquor likewise will I give to thee,  
 And friendship shall combine, and brotherhood:  
 6.3 **mickle**] much  
 6.4 **fist**] hand **forefoot**] hand  
 6.5 **tall**] valiant  
 6.8 **Couple a gorge**] Pistol intends  
*Couper la gorge* ('cut the throat').  
 7.4 **Doll Tearsheet**] a character in  
 2 *Henry IV*  
 7.7 **pauca**] alluding to the Latin  
 tag *pauca verba*, 'few words'  
 meaning' (Stevens).  
 7.1 **spital**] a charitable hospital  
 7.3 **lazar kite of Cressid's kind**]  
 i.e. leprous scavenging whore  
 7.4 **Doll Tearsheet**] a character in  
 2 *Henry IV*  
 7.7 **pauca**] alluding to the Latin  
 tag *pauca verba*, 'few words'