

ACT IV, scene i
Grumio/Curtis

GRUMIO

Fie, fie on all tired jades, on all mad masters, and all foul ways! Was ever man so beaten? was ever man so rayed? was ever man so weary? I am sent before to make a fire, and they are coming after to warm them. Now, were not I a little pot and soon hot, my very lips might freeze to my teeth, my tongue to the roof of my mouth, my heart in my belly, ere I should come by a fire to thaw me: but I, with blowing the fire, shall warm myself; for, considering the weather, a taller man than I will take cold. Holla, ho! Curtis.

Enter CURTIS

CURTIS

Who is that calls so coldly?

GRUMIO

A piece of ice: if thou doubt it, thou mayst slide from my shoulder to my heel with no greater a run but my head and my neck. A fire good Curtis.

CURTIS

Is my master and his wife coming, Grumio?

GRUMIO

O, ay, Curtis, ay: and therefore fire, fire; cast on no water.

CURTIS

Is she so hot a shrew as she's reported?

GRUMIO

She was, good Curtis, before this frost: but, thou knowest, winter tames man, woman and beast; for it hath tamed my old master and my new mistress and myself, fellow Curtis.

CURTIS

Away, you three-inch fool! I am no beast.

GRUMIO

Am I but three inches? why, thy horn is a foot; and so long am I at the least. But wilt thou make a fire, or shall I complain on thee to our mistress, whose hand, she being now at hand, thou shalt soon feel, to thy cold comfort, for being slow in thy hot office?

CURTIS

I prithee, good Grumio, tell me, how goes the world?

GRUMIO

A cold world, Curtis, in every office but thine; and therefore fire: do thy duty, and have thy duty; for my master and mistress are almost frozen to death.

CURTIS

There's fire ready; and therefore, good Grumio, the news.

GRUMIO

Why, 'Jack, boy! ho! boy!' and as much news as will thaw.

CURTIS

Come, you are so full of cony-catching!

GRUMIO

Why, therefore fire; for I have caught extreme cold. Where's the cook? is supper ready, the house trimmed, rushes strewed, cobwebs swept; the serving-men in their new fustian, their white stockings, and every officer his wedding-garment on? Be the jacks fair within, the jills fair without, the carpets laid, and every thing in order?

CURTIS

All ready; and therefore, I pray thee, news.

GRUMIO

First, know, my horse is tired; my master and mistress fallen out.

CURTIS

How?

GRUMIO

Out of their saddles into the dirt; and thereby hangs a tale.

CURTIS

Let's ha't, good Grumio.

GRUMIO

Lend thine ear.

CURTIS

Here.

GRUMIO

There.

Strikes him

CURTIS

This is to feel a tale, not to hear a tale.

GRUMIO

And therefore 'tis called a sensible tale: and this cuff was but to knock at your ear, and beseech listening. Now I begin: Imprimis, we came down a foul hill, my master riding behind my mistress,--

CURTIS

Both of one horse?

GRUMIO

What's that to thee?

CURTIS

Why, a horse.

GRUMIO

Tell thou the tale: but hadst thou not crossed me, thou shouldst have heard how her horse fell and she under her horse; thou shouldst have heard in how miry a place, how she was bemoiled, how he left her with the horse upon her, how he beat me because her horse stumbled, how she waded through the dirt to pluck him off me, how he swore, how she prayed, that never prayed before, how I cried, how the horses ran away, how her bridle was burst, how I lost my crupper, with many things of worthy memory, which now shall die in oblivion and thou return unexperienced to thy grave.

CURTIS

By this reckoning he is more shrew than she.

GRUMIO

Ay; and that thou and the proudest of you all shall find when he comes home. But what talk I of this? Call forth Nathaniel, Joseph, Nicholas, Philip, Walter, Sugarsop and the rest: let their heads be sleekly combed their blue coats brushed and their garters of an indifferent knit: let them curtsy with their left legs and not presume to touch a hair of my master's horse-tail till they kiss their hands. Are they all ready?

CURTIS

They are.

GRUMIO

Call them forth.