

King Henry IV, Part 1

by William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

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Chapter One King and Prince

Lords loyal to the English monarch have been summoned to Westminster Palace at London. All are veterans of the insurrection during which King Richard II was deposed by Lord Bolingbroke, who is now King Henry IV.

Just after ascending the throne, Henry learned that his predecessor's chief lieutenants had been captured and executed, and that Richard himself had been murdered while in custody at Pomfret Castle in Yorkshire. Henry had announced that he intended to "make a voyage to the Holy Land, to wash this blood from off my hand."

The sordid aftermath of political strife and bloodshed is abating. "Even so shaken as we are, so wan with care," says the king, "we find a time for frighted *peace!*—to pant, and breathe short-winded accents of *new broil!*—to be commenced in strands *afar remote.*

"*No more* shall the thirsty entrance of this soil daub her lips with *her own children's* blood!—*no more* shall trenching *war* channel her fields, nor bruise her flowerets with the armed hoofs of hostile paces! Those eyes which, like the meteors of a troubled heaven, all of one *nature*, of one substance bred, did lately meet in the intestine shock and furious close of civil butchery shall now, in mutual, well-beseeming ranks, march *all one way!*—and be no more opposed against acquaintance, kindred and allies!

"The edge of war like an ill-sheathed knife *no more* shall cut its master!

"Therefore, friends, as far as to *the sepulchre of Christ!*—whose soldier now, under whose blessed Cross, we are impressed and engaged to fight!—forthwith a power of English shall we levy whose arms were moulded in their mothers' womb to chase pagans in those holy fields over whose acres walked those blessed feet which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed for our advantage on the bitter Cross!

"But this our purpose now is twelve months old, and bootless 'tis to tell you *again* we will go; for that we meet not now. Then let me hear from you, my gentle cousin Westmoreland, what yesternight our Council did decree to *forward* this dear expedience."

The earl moves closer. "My liege, this question was hot in haste, and many limits of the charge set down but yesternight—when all *athwart* there came from Wales a post laden with *heavy news!*—whose worst was that the noble *Mortimer*, leading the men of Herefordshire to fight against the irregular and wild Glendower, was by the rude hands of that Welshman *taken!*—a thousand of his people *butchered!*—upon whose dead corpses there was such *misuse*, such beastly, *shameless* transformation by those Welshwomen done as may not be retold or *spoken of* without much *shame!*"

The noblemen are stunned by the news from the west.

King Henry regards Westmoreland solemnly. "It seems, then, that the tidings of this broil break off our business for the Holy Land."

"This, matched with *others*, did, my gracious lord," Westmoreland reports, for the benefit of the other courtiers. Henry already knows. Despite the pious pronouncements, he has hardly been eager to leave England, or to place trust in the ambitious deputies who have already witnessed—and executed—an overthrow.

"For *more* uneven and unwelcome news came from the *north*, and thus it did import: on Holy-Rood day there, the gallant *Hotspur*, young Harry Percy, and haught *Archibald*, that ever-valiant and battle-proven *Scot*, at Holmedon met, where they did spend a stern and bloody hour!

"As with the discharge of their *artillery*, shapèd by *likelihood* was the news told—for he that brought it did take horse in the very heat and pride of their contention, *uncertain* of the issue any way!"

Henry turns to a knight. "Here is a dear, a true, industrious friend, Sir Walter Blunt!—new-lighted from his horse, stained with the variation of each soil betwixt that Holmedon and this

seat of ours.” Holmedon is near the northernmost part of England’s border with Scotland. “And he hath brought us smooth and *welcome* news: the Earl of Douglas”—Archibald, who as a Scottish patriarch is called *the Douglas*—“is discomfited! *Ten thousand* bold Scots, two and twenty knights, *balked in their own blood* did Sir Walter see on Holmedon’s plains!

“As to prisoners, Hotspur took *Mordake*, the Earl of Fife and *Menteith*, and eldest son to beaten Douglas!—and the Earls of Athol, Murray, and Angus. Is not this an honourable spoil?—a *gallant prize!*—*eh*, Cousin, is it not?”

“In faith, it is a conquest for a *prince* to boast of!” says Westmoreland. Great ransoms will be collected for the noblemen’s release.

The king nods; but he is not pleased to hear the ambitious son a very powerful lord called *princely*. Hands clasped behind his back, Henry paces. “Yet there thou makest me sad, and makest me sin in *envy*, that my lord Northumberland should be the father to so *blest* a son!—a son who is the theme of *Honour’s* tongue!—’mongst a grove, the very straightest plant, who is sweet Fortune’s minion and her pride!—whilst *I*, looking on during praise of him, see *riot* and *dishonour* stain the brow of my young *Harry!*”

“Oh, that it could be proven that some night-tripping fairy had *exchanged* our children where they lay in cradle-clothes, and called mine Percy, his Plantagenet—then would I have *his* Harry, and he mine!”

His eldest son, Henry, Prince of Wales, is widely seen as dissolute; such an heir does nothing to strengthen the monarch’s rule during rebellions by the Scottish and Welsh, and bodes ill for succession.

Henry stops. “But let him from my thoughts. What think you, coz, of this young Percy’s *pride*? The prisoners, which he in this adventure hath surprisèd, for his *own* use he keeps!—and sends me word I shall have none but Mordake, Earl of Fife!” Each of the captives could bring a large sum.

Westmoreland frowns. “This is his *uncle’s* teaching!—this is *Worcester*, malevolent to you in all aspects, who makes him prime himself, and bristle up the crest of youth against your dignity!”

Henry nods. “And I have sent for him to *answer* for this!”

The king sighs, and regards the nobles in seeming sadness. “For this cause, a while we must neglect our holy purpose to Jerusalem.

“Cousin, on Wednesday next our Council we will hold at Windsor; so inform the lords.

“But come yourself with speed to us again, for more is to be said and to be done than out of anger can be uttered.”

Westmoreland bows. “I will, my liege.”

—
“Now, Hal, what time of day is it, lad?” moans Sir John Falstaff. He slowly sits up, atop a large, wide-cushioned couch that creaks under his fulsome form, gingerly rubs his graying temples, and peers around with bloodshot eyes.

Young Prince Henry has just returned to his lodging, leased in London. “Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack,”—dry wine, “and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to ask that which thou wouldst *truly* know!

“What the devil hast *thou* to do with the *time of day*? Unless hours were cups of *sack*, and minutes *capons*, and clocks the tongues of *bawds*, and dials the signs of *leaping-houses*,”—brothels, “and the blessèd sun himself a fair, hot *wench* in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous as to demand the time of a *day!*”

The old knight yawns, unabashed. “Indeed, you come *near* me now, Hal; for we that take purses”—rob—“go by the *moon* and the seven *stars*, and not by Phoebus,”—the sun—“be that wandering knight ever so fair!

“And, I prithee, sweet wag, when thou art *king*, as, God save Thy Grace—*Majesty*, I should say, for of *grace* thou wilt have none—”

“What, *none*?”

“No, by my troth, not so much as will serve as prologue to an egg and butter!”—grace said at table.

“Well, *what* then?” demands the prince, hands on hips. He sees Falstaff starting to sink back down on the worn couch. “Come, roundly, *roundly!*”

“Marry, *then*, sweet wag, when thou art king, let not us who are squires of the *night’s body* be called thieves of the *day’s beauty!* Let us be *Diana’s foresters*—gentlemen of the shade, minions of the *moon!* And let men say we be men of good government, being governed, as the sea is, by our noble and chaste mistress, the moon, under whose countenance we steal.”

The prince laughs at the play on *steal*. “Thou *sayest* well!—and it *holds* well, too: for the fortune of those that are the moon’s men doth ebb and flow like the sea, being governed, as the sea is, by the moon.

“As for proof: a purse full of gold most resolutely snatched on Monday night, and most dissolutely spent on Tuesday morning—got with swearing ‘*Lay by!*’ and spent with crying ‘*Bring in!*’—now is as *low* in ebb as the foot of the ladder!—and by and by is as *high* in flow as the ridge of the *gallows!*” *Lay by* is a robber’s order. *Stand back!* *Bring in* is an order for food and drink.

Falstaff cheerfully acknowledges that thievery’s rewards come and go—and he ignores the implied objection. “By the Lord, thou *sayest* true, lad!” *Bring in!* is indeed his favorite cry. “And is not my hostess of the tavern a most *sweet* wench?”

“As the honey of Hybla, my ‘old lad of the castle’”—*roisterer*. But Hal continues taunting: “And is not a buff jerkin”—a deputy-sheriff’s jacket—“the most sweet robe of *durance?*”

“How now, how *now*, mad wag?” says the knight. “*What?* In thy quips and thy quiddities, what the plague have *I* to do with a buff jerkin?”

“Well what the pox have *I* to do with thy hostess of the tavern?”

“Why, thou hast called her to a reckoning”—to explain a tab—“*many* a time, and oft—”

“Did I ever call for *thee* to pay *thy* part?”

“No, I’ll give thee thy due: thou hast paid all there.”

“Yea—and *elsewhere*, so far as my coin would stretch!” says Prince Henry. “And where it would not, I have used my credit!”

Falstaff laughs off the complaint. “Yea—and so used it that it were not *here* apparent that thou art *heir* apparent!” He sees that the prince is annoyed by the parasite’s again grumbling about the lack of luxury here, and tries a new tack. “But, I prithee, sweet wag, shall there be *gallows* standing in England when thou art king—and resolution thus foiled as it is under the rusty curb of old Father Antic, *the law?*”

“Do not *thou*, when thou art king, hang a thief,” he urges.

“No; *thou* shalt.”

“*Shall* I? Oh, *rare!*” laughs Falstaff. “By the Lord, I’ll be a remarkable judge!”

“Thou judgest falsely already! I mean thou shalt *have* the hanging of the thieves, and so become a rare *hangman.*”

The knight only chuckles. “Well, Hal, well.” He ponders, still expecting to be an influential—and thus wealthy—courtier during Hal’s reign. “And in some sort it jumps with my temperament as well as waiting in the court, I can tell you!”

In court. Asks the prince, “For obtaining of *suits?*”—in litigation seeking money.

“*Yea*, for obtaining of suits—whereof the hangman hath no lean wardrobe!” retorts Falstaff; customarily, an executioner can claim the dead man’s clothes. But now he slides back, resuming his posture of sorrowful suffering. “‘Sblood, I am as melancholy as a *gib cat*”—a neutered male—“or a *baited bear!*”

“Or an *old* lion—or a lover’s *lute,*” gibes the prince, observing the knight’s long, unkempt hair and bulbous belly.

“Yea, or the drone of a *Lincolnshire* bagpipe!”—sounding even worse for poor playing.

The prince laughs, looking at Falstaff: a windbag full of sad sounds indeed. He thinks of other sources of misery. “What *sayest* thou to a *nightmare* in the melancholy of *Moor-ditch?*”—

known for its putrid muck.

Falstaff winces. “Thou hast the most *unsavoury* similes, and art indeed the most comparative, *rascalli*est, sweet young prince!

“But, Hal, I prithee, trouble me no more with notions.

“I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of *good names* were to be bought! An old lord of the Council berated me the other day in the street about *you*, sir!” The fat commoner is thought to be debilitating the prince, a nobleman; the remedy Falstaff has in mind is not to desist, but to rise above the issue—by obtaining a title of nobility. “But I marked him not; and yet he *talked*, very wisely, but I regarded him not; and *yet* he talked wisely!—and in the *street*, too!”

“Thou didst well; for wisdom cries out in the streets, yet no man regards it,” says Hal, dryly referring to Proverbs.

Falstaff protests Scriptural sarcasm: “Oh, thou hast *damnable* iteration—and art indeed apt to corrupt a *saint*!

“Thou hast done much *harm* upon me, Hal; God forgive thee for it! Before I knew *thee*, Hal, I knew *nothing*!”—in the sense of Adam’s innocent ignorance before the Fall. “But now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the *wicked*!”

Assigning the Edenic snake’s role to the prince, he would—facetiously—absolve himself.

The knight exudes a grand sigh. “I must give over this life. And I *will* give it over!” he claims, righteously. “By the Lord, an I do not, I am a villain! I’ll never be damned for any *king’s son* in Christendom!”

“Where shall we take a purse tomorrow, Jack?”

“*Zounds*, wherever thou *wilt*, lad!” cries Falstaff happily. “*I’ll* make one!”—be with you. “An I do not, call me *villain* and *baffle* me!”—*hang me upside down*.

Prince Henry laughs. “I see a *good* amendment of life in *thee*!—from praying to *purse-taking*!”

“Why, Hal, ’tis my *vocation*, Hal! ’Tis no sin for a man to labour in his *vocation*,” argues Falstaff. He spots a drinking comrade, a gentleman, if one of limited means, entering at the far door. “Poins!

“Now shall we know if Gadshill have set a match! Oh, if men were *not* to be saved by merit, what hole in Hell were hot enough for *him*? This is the most omnipotent villain that ever cried ‘Stand!’”—as in *Stand and deliver*, a robber’s demand—“to an *honest* man!”

The man they call Gadshill alerts bandits as to when travelers will be on the highway between London and Canterbury—including charitable pilgrims who can be relieved of their gold atop Gad’s Hill.

“Good morrow, Ned,” says the prince.

“Good morrow, sweet Hal!” Poins regards the supine sufferer. “What says Monsieur *Remorse*? What says Sir Sack-and-Sugar, Jack?”—a gibe at Falstaff’s habitual sweetening of the white wine. He sits beside the knight and claps him heartily on the shoulder—jarring an aching head, and provoking a pained gasp. “Jack! How agrees the Devil with thee about thy *soul*?—which thou *soldest* him on Good-Friday last for a cup of Madeira and a cold capon’s leg!”

“Sir John stands to his word; the Devil shall *have* his bargain,” says the prince. “For he was never yet a breaker of *proverbs*; he will *Give the Devil his due*!”

Poins shakes his head mournfully at Falstaff, noting an irony: “Then art thou *damned* for *keeping thy word*!”

The prince laughs. “Else he had been *damned* for *cozening* the Devil!”—cheating him.

Poins now stands, eager to tell his news. “But, my lads, my *lads*!—early tomorrow morning, by four o’clock at Gad’s Hill, there are *pilgrims* going to Canterbury with *rich offerings*!—and *traders* riding to London with *fat purses*!

“I have *vizards*”—masks—“for you all; you have horses for yourselves. Gadshill lies tonight in Rochester”—a town near the robbery site. He rubs his hands together eagerly. “We may do it as securely as *sleep*! I have bespoken *supper* tomorrow night in *Eastcheap*”—the tawdry suburb of

London they customarily frequent, and to which they can repair after the caper. “If you will go I will stuff your purses full of *crowns!* If you will not, tarry at home and be hanged!”

Falstaff sits up. “*Hear ye, sly man: if I tarry at home and go not, I’ll hang you for going!*”

Poins scoffs. “*You will, chops?*”

“Hal, wilt thou make one?”—of the party, asks Falstaff.

“Who, *I—rob? I, a thief?* Not I, by my faith!”

Falstaff challenges: “There’s neither *honesty, manhood, nor good fellowship* in thee, nor camest thou of the blood *royal*, if thou darest not stand for ten shillings!”—the value of the coin called a *royal*.

The prince seems to consider a first: “Well, then *once* in my days I’d be a madcap....”

“Why, that’s *well said!*” cries Falstaff.

But the prince shakes his head. “Come what will, I’ll tarry at home.”

Falstaff persists. “By the Lord, I’ll be a *traitor* then, when thou art king!”

“I care not.” Hal is sure Falstaff’s only real allegiance is to the knight’s own welfare.

Says Poins, “Sir John, I prithee leave the prince and me alone. I will lay him down such *reasons* for this adventure that he shall go.” He knows Falstaff wants to apply his standard palliative for the consequences of excessive drink—more wine.

The knight struggles to his feet. “Well, God give *thee* the spirit of persuasion, and *him* the ears for profiting, so that what thou speakest may move, and what he hears may be believed!—so that the prince may, for recreation’s sake, prove a *false* thief—and for the *true* abuses of these poor times lack countenance!”—act as a Robin Hood.

“Farewell,” groans Falstaff as he totters away. “You shall find me in Eastcheap.”

“Farewell, thou latter spring!” says Prince Henry as the aging knight passes the door. He sees Poins’ expression and revises: “Farewell, all-blown summer!”

Says Poins, “Now, my good, sweet, honied lord, ride with us tomorrow! I have a *jest* to execute that I cannot manage alone!

“Falstaff, Bardolph, Peto and Gadshill shall rob those men that we have already targeted; *yourself and I* will *not* be there! And when they have the booty—if you and I do not *rob them*, cut this head off from my shoulders!”

“How shall we *part* with them, in setting forth?”

“Why, we will set forth before or after them, and appoint them a place of meeting—wherein it is at our pleasure to *fail!* And then will they adventure upon the exploit themselves—which they shall no sooner have achieved but we’ll set upon them!”

“Yea, but ’tis likely that they will know us by our horses, by our habits, and by every other appointment, to be ourselves.”

“*Tsk!* Our *horses* they shall not *see!*—I’ll tie them in the wood. Our *vizards* we will *change* after we leave them! *And, sirrah, I have cases of buckram*”—long, rough cloaks—“for the nonce to *immask* our noted outward garments!”

“Yea, but I suspect they will be too hard for us.”

“Well, as for *two* of them, I know them to be as true-bred *cowards* as ever turned a back! And for the third,”—he means Falstaff—“if he *fight* longer than he *sees reason*, I’ll forswear arms!

“The *virtue* of this quest will be the incredible *lies* that this same fat rogue will tell us when we meet at supper!—how *thirty*, at least, he fought with!—what *words*, what *blows!*—what extremities he *endured!*”

“And in the *reproof* of that lies the *jest!*” says Poins gleefully.

The prince is persuaded. “Well, I’ll go with thee! Provide us all things necessary, and meet me tonight in Eastcheap, where I’ll sup. Farewell.”

Poins is very pleased. “Farewell, my lord!” He goes on his way.

Alone, Prince Henry ruminates about his coarse companions.

I know you all, and will awhile uphold the unyokèd humour of your idleness.

Yet herein will I imitate the sun, who doth permit the base, contagious clouds to smother up

his beauty from the world, so that, when he please again to be himself, being wanted, he may be more wondered at by breaking through the foul and ugly mists of vapours that did seem to strangle him.

If all the year were playing-holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work; but when they seldom come, they wished-for come; and nothing pleaseth like rare accidents. So when this loose behavior I throw off, and pay a debt I never promised, by how much better than my word I am!

By so much shall I fortify men's hopes. And like bright metal on a sullen ground, my reformation, glittering o'er my fault, shall show more goodly, and attract more eyes, than that which hath no foil to set it off.

I'll so offend as to make offence a skill—redeeming time when men least think I will.

Chapter Two Plans Afoot

At court, the king glares. “My blood hath been too cold and temperate, unapt to stir at these indignities,” he tells the three summoned noblemen. “And so you have *found* me—for accordingly you *treed upon my patience!*”

“But be sure I will from henceforth be *myself*, mighty and to be *feared*, rather than my condition which hath been smooth as *oil*, soft as young *down*—and therefore lost that title of *respect* which the proud soul ne'er pays but to the *proud!*”

Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, protests: “*Our* House, my sovereign liege, little deserves the scourge of greatness to be used on it!—that *same* greatness, too, which our own hands have help to *make* so portly,” he adds, indignantly.

“My lord—” begins Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, trying to intercede for his too-frank older brother.

But now King Henry, chided, is angry. “Worcester, *get thee gone*; for I do see danger and *disobedience* in thine eye! Oh, sir, your presence is too *bold* and *peremptory*—and majesty might never yet endure a moody front on a *servant* brow! You have good leave to *leave* us; when we need your use and counsel, we shall *send for you!*”

Worcester is stunned to be chastised so harshly by the previously amenable king; but, wisely, he bows and leaves the chamber.

Still frowning, King Henry looks at Northumberland. “You were about to speak.”

“Yea, my good lord. Those prisoners in Your Highness' name demanded, which Harry Percy, here,” he says, a hand on his son's shoulder, “at Holmedon took, were *not*, he says, denied with such strength as is described to Your Majesty! Either *envy*, therefore, or *misprision* is guilty of this fault—and not my son!”

“My liege, I did deny *no* prisoners!” blurts Hotspur vehemently; the reckless young Harry Percy's commonly used appellation is well warranted. “But, as I remember it, when the *fight* was done, when I was dry with rage and extreme toil, breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword, came there a certain lord—neat, and trimly dressed, fresh as a bridegroom! His *chin* new-reaped showed like a stubble-land at harvest-end—and he was *perfumed* like a *milliner!* And 'twixt his finger and his thumb he held a pouncet-box,”—a little tin of aromatic powder, “which ever and anon he gave to his *nose*, then took't away again—which nose, *angry* therewith, when next it came there, *took it in snuff!*”—sniffed at it.

Hotspur continues boldly: “And ever he *smiled* and *talked*. Then, as the soldiers bore dead bodies by, he called them untaught *knaves*—*unmannerly*, to bring a slovenly, unhandsome *corpse* betwixt the wind and his nobility!

“With many *holiday* and *lady* terms he questioned me—and amongst the rest, demanded my prisoners in Your Majesty's behalf.

“I, then all *smarting* with my *wounds*, cold to being so pestered by a *popinjay*, out of my grief

and my impatience answered neglectingly: *I knew not what he should or he should not have!* For it made me angry to see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet, and talk so like a *waiting-gentlewoman* of guns and drums—and *wounds*, God save the mark!—and telling me the *sovereign'st* thing on earth was *pharmacia* for an inward bruise,”—for indigestion, “and that it was *great* pity, so it was, that this villainous *salt-petre*”—gunpowder’s main ingredient—“should be dugged out of the bowels of the harmless earth, which many a good, tall fellow had destroyed so *cowardly*—and but for these vile *guns*, he would *himself* have been a soldier!

“This bald, disjointed *chatter* of his, my lord, I answered *indirectly*, as I said! And I beseech you, let not *his* report become occasion for an accusation betwixt my love and Your High Majesty!”

Sir Walter Blunt comments, calmly, to the king: “The circumstance considered, good my lord, whate’er Lord Harry Percy then had said to such a person, and in such a place at such a time, with all the rest retold, may reasonably die, and never rise to do him wrong or any way impeach, so he unsay it *now*.”

That fails to mollify the king. “Why, *yet* he doth deny me his prisoners!—and with proviso and exception that *we, at our own charge*, shall ransom straight his *brother-in-law*, the foolish *Mortimer!*—who, on my soul, hath *willfully betrayed the lives* of those that he did lead to fight against that great magician, damnèd *Glendower!*—whose *daughter*, as we hear, the Earl of March”—Mortimer—“hath lately *married!*”

Hotspur’s own wife is the sister of young Edmund Mortimer, who has indeed married the daughter of his Scottish enemy—who now demands money for the release of the English son-in-law he holds prisoner.

“Shall *our* coffers, then, be emptied to redeem a *traitor* home? Shall we *buy treason*, and indenture us to *fools*, when they have lost and forfeited *themselves*?

“*No!* On the barren mountains let him *starve!*—for I shall never hold that man my friend whose tongue shall ask me for *one penny’s* cost to ransom home revolted Mortimer!”

“*Revolted* Mortimer!” cries Hotspur indignantly. “He never did fall away, my sovereign liege, but by the chance of *war!* To prove *that* true needs no more but *one* tongue for *all those wounds*—those mouthèd wounds which valiantly he took when on the gentle Severn’s sedgy bank, in single opposition, hand-to-hand, he did confound the best part of an hour exchanging hardiment with great Glendower!”

He describes a fight at the river. “*Three times* they breathed, and three times did they drink, upon agreement, of swift Severn’s flood—which, then affrighted with their gory looks, ran fearfully among the trembling reeds, and hid its crisp head in the hollow bank, bloodstained by those valiant combatants!

“Never did base and rotten *policy* colour its working with such deadly wounds!—nor could the noble Mortimer receive so *many* at all *willingly!* Then let not him be slandered with ‘*revolt!*’”

“Thou dost *belie* him, Percy!—*thou dost belie him!*” shouts King Henry. “He never did encounter with Glendower! I tell thee, he durst as well have met *the Devil* alone as *Owen Glendower* for an enemy!

“Art thou not *ashamed?* But, sirrah, henceforth let me not hear you *speak* of Mortimer!

“*Send me your prisoners*, and *by the speediest means!*—or you shall hear in such a kind from me as will *displease you!*”

“My Lord Northumberland,” he tells Hotspur’s father coldly, “we licence your *departure* with your son!” He turns his back to them. As the king leaves, with Blunt and the royal attendants following, he turns to warn Hotspur again. “Send us your prisoners—or *you will hear of it!*”

The Percys bow, then watch as their London host—his hospitality withdrawn—stalks away.

Hotspur fumes. “An if the *Devil* come and *roar* for them, I will not send them!” he mutters. “I will after straight and *tell* him so!—for I will ease my *heart*, albeit I make a hazard of my head!”

“What, *drunk with cholera?*” cries the old earl, grasping his arm to restrain the young lord. “Stay, and pause awhile; here comes your uncle.” Lord Worcester can now return to the throne

room from the corridor. Northumberland tells him, "Brother, the king hath made your nephew *mad!*"

"What struck *this* heat up after I was gone?"

Hotspur is scowling. "He would, forsooth, *have all my prisoners!* And when I urged the ransom once again of *my wife's brother*, then his cheek looked pale, and on my face he turned an eye of death, trembling in rage at even the *name* of Mortimer!"

"I cannot blame him," says Worcester. "Was not he proclaimed by *Richard*, that dead is, the next of blood?"

"He *was!*—I heard the proclamation," says Northumberland; the late monarch had named Mortimer, the Earl of March, to be his heir. "And then it was when that unhappy king—whose wrongs by us God pardon!—did set forth upon his Irish expedition, from whence he, intercepted, did return, only to be deposed—and shortly *murdered!*"

"And for whose death, in the world's wide mouth *we live scandalized and foully spoken of!*" notes Worcester sadly.

"But soft, I pray you!" says Hotspur, surprised. "Did King Richard then proclaim my brother-in-law Edmund Mortimer *heir to the crown?*"

Northumberland nods. "He *did*; myself did hear it."

"Nay, then I cannot blame this *cozen*-king for wishing him on the barren mountains to starve!"—and thus pose no threat of claiming the throne. Hotspur regards the older men. "But shall it be that *you*—who *set* the crown upon the head of this *forgetful* man, and for *his* sake wear the detested blot of murderous subornation—shall it be that you a world of *curses* undergo for being the *agents*, or base *seconds?*—*means*, the rope, the ladder? Or the *hangmen* rather!" He sees his father and uncle flushing angrily.

Hotspur persists in sarcasm. "Oh, *pardon* me that I descend so *low* as to show the lane and the predicament wherein you range under this subtle king!

"Shall it for *shame* be spoken in these days, or fill up chronicles in *time to come*, that men of your nobility and power did gage them both in an *unjust* behalf!—as both of you, God pardon it, *have done!*—to put down Richard, that sweet, lovely rose, and plant this *thorn*, this *canker*, *Bolingbroke?*

"And shall it in *more* shame be further spoken that you, *tooled*, are *shook off* and *discarded* by him for whom these shames ye underwent?

"*No!*—*yet* time serves wherein you may *redeem* your banished honours, and restore yourselves into the good thoughts of the world again! *Revenge* the jeering disdain and contempt of this proud king who studies, day and night, how to answer all the *debt* he owes to you with the bloody payment of even your *deaths!*

"Therefore, *I* say—"

"*Peace*, Nephew! *Say no more!*" hisses Worcester, looking fearfully around the huge hall; it is empty except for the three lords, but its doors are open. He steps closer to the others and lowers his voice. "And now I will unclasp a *secret book*, and to you quick-conceiving discontents I'll read you matter deep and *dangerous*—as full of peril and *adventurous* spirit as to o'er-walk a loud-roaring *current* on the unsteady footing of a *spear!*"

"If we fall in, *Good night!*—either sink or swim!" cries Hotspur. "*Send* danger from the east unto the west if *honour* confront it from the north to south!—and let them *grapple!* *Oh*, the blood more stirs *rousing a lion* than startling a hare!"

Northumberland warns his brother, "Imagination of some great exploit drives him beyond the bounds of *patience.*"

Hotspur is eager: "By heaven, methinks it were an *easy* leap to pluck bright Honour from the pale-faced *moon!*—or dive into the bottom of the *deep*, where fathoming line could never touch the ground, and pluck up drownèd Honour by the locks!—so that he who doth *redeem* her thence might wear, without co-rival, *all her dignities!*

"But *out* upon this *half*-faced fellowship!" he growls, craving overt action.

His brashness annoys the elders. Says Worcester. “He apprehends a *world of figures* here, but not the form of what he *should* attend!

“Good nephew, give me *audience* for a while!”

Hotspur nods, trying to calm himself. “I cry you mercy.”

Worcester continues: “Those same noble Scots that are your prisoners—”

“*I’ll keep them all!* By God, he shall not have a *Scot* of them,” cries Hotspur. “Not if a Scot would *save his soul*, he shall not! I’ll *keep* them, by this hand!”

Lord Worcester frowns. “You start *awry*, and lend no ear unto my purposes! Those prisoners you shall keep—”

“*Aye*, I *will*, that’s flat! He said he would not ransom Mortimer—*forbade* my tongue to *speak* of Mortimer!—but I will find him when he lies asleep, and in his ear I’ll *holla* ‘Mortimer!’ Nay, I’ll have a *starling* that shall be taught to speak nothing *but* ‘Mortimer,’ and *give* it him to keep his anger ever in motion!”

“*Hear* you, Nephew; a *word*—”

But Hotspur rages on: “All studies here I solemnly defy save how to *gall* and *pinch* this Bolingbroke!” He thinks of the king’s older son. “And that same sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales! But that I think his father loves him not, and would be *glad* if he met with some mischance, I would have him *poisoned* with a pot of *ale!*”

Hotspur’s anger is still rising. “...*speak* of Mortimer!’ *Zounds*, I *will* speak of him!—and let my soul need mercy if I do not *join with him!* Yea, on his part I’ll *empty all these veins*, and shed my dear blood *drop by drop* in the *dust*, but I will lift the down-trod Mortimer as high in the air as this unthankful ‘*king*’—as this ingrate and cankered *Bolingbroke!*”

Worcester throws up his hands. “Farewell, kinsman. I’ll talk to you when you are better tempered to attend.”

Says Northumberland to his impetuous son, “Why, what a *wasp-stung* and impatient *fool* art thou, to break into this *woman’s* mood, tying thine ear to no tongue but thine *own!*”

Hotspur protests: “Why, look you, I am *whipped*, and *scourged with rods*, *nettled* and *stung* with *pismires*, when I *hear* of this vile *politician* Bolingbroke!

“In Richard’s time—” He frowns, trying to remember. “What do you call the place?—a plague upon it!—it is in Gloucestershire.... ’Twas where the madcap duke met his uncle, his uncle *York*—where I first bent my knee unto this *king of smiles*, this *Bolingbroke!* ’Sblood!—when you and he came back from Ravenspurgh....”

“At Berkeley castle,” says Northumberland.

“You say true! Why, what a deal of candied courtesy this fawning greyhound *then* did proffer me, look you!—when his ‘infant fortune’ came to *age*, and ‘*gentle Harry Percy*,’ and ‘*kind cousin!*’ Oh, the devil take such *cozeners!* God, forgive me!”

He sees that Worcester is turning away to go. “Good uncle, tell your tale; I have done.”

“Nay, if you have *not*, *to* it again,” says the nobleman testily. “We will stay *your* leisure!”

Hotspur again makes an effort to calm himself. “I have done, i’ faith.”

“Then once *more*: as for your Scottish prisoners: deliver them up straight—in *Scotland*, *without their ransom*, and make the Douglas’s son-in-law”—Mortimer—“*your means for power*—which, for divers reasons I shall send you written, be assurèd will *easily be granted!*”

“*You*, my lord,” he tells Northumberland, “your son being thus employed in Scotland, shall secretly into the bosom creep of that same noble, well belovèd prelate, the *Archbishop*—”

“Of *York*, is it not?” Hotspur knows who has been increasingly dissident.

“True—he bears *hard* the Lord Scroop his brother’s death at Bristol.”

He moves even closer. “I speak this not as what I think *might* be, but what I *know* is ruminated, *plotted* and *set down*, and only stays but to behold the face of that occasion that shall bring it on!”

“I smell it!” cries Hotspur, his voice echoing from the chamber’s high timbers. “Upon my life, it will do *well!*”

Northumberland, alarmed, hushes him: “Before the game is afoot, thou still let’st slip!”

The young man speaks enthusiastically—but more quietly. “Why, it cannot choose but be a noble plot! And then the powers of Scotland and of York are to join with Mortimer, *eh?*”

Worcester nods. “And so they *shall*.”

Hotspur is delighted. “In faith, it is *exceedingly* well aimed!”

The older earl continues: “And ’tis no little reason bids us *speed*, to *save* our heads by the *raising* of a head!”—assembling an armed force. “For, bear ourselves as evenly as we can, the king will always think him in our debt, and think we think ourselves unsatisfied, till he hath found a time to pay us home!—and see how *already* he doth begin to make us strangers to his looks of love!”

“He does, he *does!*” says Hotspur intensely. “We’ll be *revenged* on him!”

“Cousin, farewell,” says Worcester. “No *further* go in this than I by letters shall direct your course! When time is *ripe*, which will be *suddenly*, I’ll steal to Glendower and Lord Mortimer—where you and Douglas and *our* powers at once, as I will fashion it, shall happily *meet!*—to bear our fortunes, which now we hold, with much uncertainty, *in our own strong arms!*”

Northumberland grips his hand. “Farewell, good brother! We shall *thrive*, I trust!”

Hotspur bows. “Uncle, adieu!”

“Oh, let the hours be short till fields and blows and groans applaud our sport!”

Two burly freight carriers walk through the dark courtyard of the old inn at Rochester. “*Heigh-ho!* An it be not four into the day, I’ll be hanged!” complains the taller, eager to be on the road. He is accustomed to reckoning time by the stars. “*Charles’s wain*”—a wagon-shaped constellation—“is over the new chimney, and yet *our* horses not packed!” Lifting his lantern, he calls toward the wide entrance to the stable: “What! —*Ostler!*”

From within comes a muffled, sleepy voice. “Anon, anon....” The word for *immediately* is often proffered during waits.

As they stand in the chill, Mugs tells his companion, “I prithee, Tom, beat Cut’s saddle, put a few flocks in the point”—soften the nag’s tack, and cushion it with wool. “Poor jade is wrung in the withers out of all cess.”

Tom worries that mildewed feed will sicken their horses. “Peas and beans are as dank here as a *bog*—and that is the next way to give poor jades the bots!”—worms. He shakes his head. “This house is turned upside down since *Robin* ostler died.”

“Poor fellow never joyed since the price of *oats* rose; it was the death of him.”

Tom smacks at his own thick arms. “I think this be the most villainous house in all London road for *fleas!* I am stung like a tench!”—a speckled fish.

“Like at *trench!*”—a place to defecate, laughs Mugs. “By the mass, there is ne’er a king christened could be better bit than *I* have been since the first cock!”—which crowed after midnight.

Tom shrugs. “Well, they will allow us ne’er a jordan; so then we leak in the chimney—and your chamber-lye breeds fleas like a bitch!” With no chamber-pots in the carriers’ common sleeping quarters, the men piss onto the insect-infested hearth.

The older carrier is impatient to be on the road again. “What, *ostler!* Come away and be hanged!”

Tom considers his load of goods. “I have a gammon of bacon and two razes of ginger, to be delivered as far as Charing Cross.”

Mugs, too, wants to be on his way. “God’s body, the turkeys in my pannier are quite starved! *What, ostler? A plague* on thee!—hast thou never an *eye* in thy head? Canst not *hear?* An ’twere not as good a deed as *drink* to *break the pate* on thee, I am a very villain! Come and be *hanged!* Hast thou no *faith* in thee?”

Behind them, another guest has come out of the dark inn. “Good morrow, carriers,” yawns Gadshill. “What’s o’clock?”

“I think it be two o’clock,” Mugs tells an apparent competitor.

“I pray thee, lend me thy lantern, to see my gelding in the stable,” says the stocky newcomer.

“Nay, by God, soft!” says the cautious carrier, holding it back; the man doesn’t look prosperous enough to own a riding horse. “I know a trick worth *two* of *that*, i’ faith!”

Gadshill turns to Tom. “I pray thee, lend me thine.”

“Aye—*when?*” laughs the wary man, keeping it well away, “can’st tell? ‘*Lend* me thy lantern,’ quoth he? Marry, I’ll see thee hanged first!”

“Sirrah carrier, what time do you mean to come to London?” Gadshill asks Tom.

“Time enough to go to bed with a *candle*, I warrant thee.” Their long day of travel—already delayed by the ostler—will end after dark. “Come, neighbour Mugs,” Tom tells his friend, “we’ll call up the gentlemen. They will go along with *company*, for they have great charge”—valuables to protect.

The men head into the inn to awaken the travelers who have asked to make the day’s ride with them.

“What, *ho!* Chamberlain!” says Gadshill, looking across the dim, empty courtyard, back toward the hostelry.

A swarthy man ambles from the silent building, and his rough voice answers, sourly, “‘At *hand*,’ quoth pick-purse!”

Gadshill regards his cohort. “That’s as good as ‘At hand, quoth the *chamberlain*,’ for *thou* variest no more from picking of purses than giving *direction* doth from *labouring*: thou layest the plot *how!*”

“Good morrow, Master Gadshill,” says the inn-keeper’s assistant. “It holds current, what I told you yesternight: there’s a franklin from the wild of Kent hath brought *three hundred marks* with him in *gold!* I heard him tell it to one of his company last night at supper, a kind of state auditor; one that hath abundance of charge, too—God knows what!

“They are up already, and call for eggs in butter; they will away presently,” he warns.

Gadshill is confident about the intended robbery. “Sirrah, if they meet not with Saint Nicholas’ clerks”—a wry term for robbers; Nicholas is the patron saint of travelers—“I’ll *give* thee this neck!”—throat to cut.

“No, *I’ll* none of it!” chuckles the chamberlain, “I pray thee keep *that* for the *hangman*; for I know thou worshippest St. Nicholas as *truly* as a man of *falsehood* may!”

“What talkest thou to me of the *hangman*? If *I* hang, I’ll have a *pair* of gallows!—for if I hang, old Sir John hangs with me, and thou knowest he is no *starveling!*”

“*Tsk!* There are *other* Trojans”—London accomplices—“that thou dreamest not of, the which for *sport’s* sake are content to do the profession some *grace*—who would, if matters should be looked into, for their own credit’s sake, make all whole.

“I am joined by no foot-land rakers, no long-staff, sixpenny strikers, none of these mad-mustachio’d, purple-hued malt-worms!”—flush-faced ale-drinkers, “but with *nobility* and tranquillity—*burgomasters* and...”—he gropes for a superlative—“*great one-yers!*—such as can *hold* in it, such as will *strike* sooner than speak, and *speak* sooner than drink, and *drink* sooner than *pray!*”

He considers the mischievous prince to be one of the realm’s many predatory patricians. “And yet, ‘*zounds*, I *lie*; for they pray continually to *their* saint, the ‘*commonwealth*’—or rather, not pray *to* her, but prey *on* her: for they ride up and down on her and make her their boots!”—gains.

“What, the commonwealth their *boots*? Will she keep out water in foul weather?”

Gadshill laughs at the play on words, and makes another: “She will, she *will*: ‘justice’ hath *liquored* her!”—*plied*, instead of *lacquered* to seal against leaks. The legal establishment is widely considered corrupt.

And he believes he and his fellows have princely protection. “*We* steal as in a *castle*, *cock sure*: we have the recipe for *fern-seed!*”—a magical powder. His eyes widen in pretend awe: “*We*

walk *invisible!*”

The cynical chamberlain makes a face as he smoothes his greasy black hair. “Nay, by my faith, I think you are more beholding to the *night* than to fern-seed for your walking invisible.”

Gadshill laughs. “Give me thy hand! Thou shalt have a share in our purchase, as I am a true man!”

The chamberlain grins as they shake. “Nay, rather let me have it as you are a *false thief!*”

“Go to! *Homo*”—he pronounces it like *how more*—“is a name common to all men!” Gadshill finds ubiquity in greed. He looks with annoyance toward the stable. “Bid the ostler bring my gelding out of the stable.”

But the wizard of waylaying is heading back to the inn. “Fare *well*, you muddy knave!”

Chapter Three Into Action

On the highway outside Rochester lies Gad’s Hill, where Poins, seeing by starlight, motions Prince Henry into a copse of elm beside the rutted, sloping road. “Come, shelter, shelter!” he whispers. “I have removed Falstaff’s horse!—and he frets like a gummèd velvet!”—his nap is raised.

“Stand close!” warns the prince. Poins moves behind a tree as the heavy knight approaches with a lantern.

“*Poins!*” calls Falstaff, peering around and puffing. “*Poins*, and be hanged! *Poins!*”

Says the prince, coming forward, “*Peace*, ye fat-kidneyed rascal! What a bawling dost thou keep!”

“Where’s Poins, Hal?”

“He has walked up to the top of the hill. I’ll go seek him.”

Falstaff is furious. “I am *accursed* to rob in that *thief’s* company!” he tells the prince, who is vanishing into the near-darkness. *The rascal hath removed my horse, and tied him I know not where! If I travel further afield but four foot by the square I shall break my wind!*

Well, I doubt not but to die a fair death for all this—if I ’scape hanging for killing that rogue! I have forsworn his company hourly any time this two and twenty years, and yet I am bewitched into the rascal’s company! If the rogue hath not given me concoctions to make me love him, I’ll be hanged!—it could not be else! I have drunk potions!

“*Poins?*” He raises the lantern, trying to see farther, past its glare. “*Hal?*”

“A plague upon you both!” he mutters. “*Bardolph! Peto!*” There is no answer from his other companions in crime, yet to arrive.

I’ll starve ere I’ll rob a foot further! he vows. *An ’twere not as good a deed as drinking to turn true man and to leave these rogues, I am the veriest varlet that ever chewed with a tooth! Eight yards of uneven ground is threescore and ten miles afoot with me!—and the stony-hearted villain knows it well enough! A plague upon it when thieves cannot be true one to another!*

He hears a distinctive whistle. “A plague upon you all!” he cries. “Give me my *horse*, you rogue; give me my horse, and be hanged!”

“*Peace*, ye fat-guts!” says Prince Henry, coming back to the lantern-light with Poins. “Lie down! Lay thine ear close to the ground, and list if thou canst hear the tread of travellers....”

Falstaff stares. “Have you any *levers* to lift me up again, being down?” he demands.

“Sblood, I’ll not bear mine own flesh so far afoot *again* for all the coin in thy father’s exchequer!”—the royal treasury. “What the plague mean ye to colt”—demean—“me thus?”

“Thou *liest*: thou art not colted, thou art *un-colted!*”

Falstaff is not amused. “I prithee, good Prince Hal, help me to my horse, good king’s son.”

“*Out*, ye rogue!—shall *I* be your *ostler?*”

“Go!—*hang* thyself in thine own heir-apparent garters! If I be ta’en, I’ll *impeach* for this!”—

inform on them, he warns. “An I have not *ballads* made on you all, and sung to filthy tunes, let a cup of sack be my poison!” He wags his head in annoyance. “When a jest is so insolent—and *afoot*, too!—I *hate* it!”

Three other riders now approach, coming up the road from Rochester. Gadshill spots Falstaff first, of course. “Stand!” he orders, drawing his sword.

“So I *do*, against my will!” replies the knight peevishly, as the others dismount.

Poins recognizes their instigator: “Oh, ’tis our *setter*! I know his voice.” He asks one of the men arriving with Gadshill, “Bardolph, what news?”

“Case ye, *case* ye!” says the red-bearded bandit, “on with your *vizards*! There’s money of the king’s coming up the hill!—’tis going to the royal exchequer!”

“You lie, ye rogue; ’tis going to the king’s *tavern*!” says Falstaff.

Gadshill, too, is eager. “There’s enough to *make* us *all*!”

“To be *hanged*,” says Falstaff sourly.

Prince Henry takes charge. “Sirs, you four shall confront them in the narrow lane; Ned Poins and I will walk lower; if they ’scape from *your* encounter, then they alight on us!”

“How many be there of them?” asks Peto.

“Some eight or ten,” Gadshill reports.

“’*Zounds*!—will they not rob *us*?” asks Falstaff.

Prince Henry chides: “*What?*—a *coward*, Sir John *Paunch*?”

“Indeed, I am *not* John of *Gaunt*, your grandfather,” Falstaff replies. “But yet no coward, Hal!”

“Well, we’ll leave that to the proof.”

“Sirrah Jack,” laughs Poins, “thy horse stands behind the hedge; when thou needest him, there thou shalt find him. Farewell—and stand fast!”

Falstaff grumbles to himself, *Now cannot I strike him, lest I should be hanged!*

Prince Henry asks Poins, “Ned, where are our disguises?”

“Here, hard by. Stand close,” he tells the others, as they all put on masks. He and the prince hurry away.

Over the hilltop and part way down the other side they will put on their alternate masks, plus long, coarse cloaks.

The knight tells the others, “Now, my masters, every man to his business, and *happy* man be his dole, say I!” He shuts the lantern’s metal shades to hide its light, and the robbers draw swords, raise pistols, and take positions, ready to block the road.

One of the unsuspecting pilgrims can be heard, talking as they amble uphill: “Come, neighbour. The boy shall lead our horses down the other side; we’ll walk *afoot* awhile, and ease our legs.”

“*Stand!*” shouts Gadshill, brandishing his sword, which gleams as the lantern suddenly throws forth light.

The travelers stop, gaping at the masked men. “Jesus bless us!”

“*Strike! Down* with them! *Cut the villains’ throats!*” howls Falstaff. “All whoreson *caterpillars!*”—parasites. “Bacon-fed *knaves!* They hate us *youth!* *Down* with them!—*fleece* them!”

“Oh, we are *undone*,” moans the terrified lead traveler, “both we and ours forever!”

“*Hang*, ye gorbellied *knaves!*” bellows Falstaff. “Are ye *undone*? *No*, ye fat *chuffs!*—I would your stores *were* here!” He motions the frightened victims away from the boy leading their mounts, and Bardolph ties their hands. “*On*, *bacons*, *on!* *What*, ye *knaves?*—young men must *live!* You are *grand-jurors*, are ye? We’ll *’jure* ye, i’ faith!”—*abjure*.

Holding out a canvas bag, Peto goes from man to man, carefully robbing the king’s agent, the pilgrim, and two carriers, Tom and Mugs. Then, at a signal from their leader, the bandits hasten up the hill, then down the long incline.

Below, Prince Henry hears the clumping of their boots. “The thieves have bound the true

men,” he whispers to Poins. “Now, could thou and I *rob the thieves* and go merrily to London, it would be *argument* for a week, *laughter* for a month—and a good *jest* forever!”

“Stand close,” says Poins, his voice hushed, “I hear them coming!” They straighten the masks and pull down the brims of their plumed hats.

The robbers are marching down the sloping road, quite pleased with the success of their adventure.

“Come, my masters, let us share, and then to horse before day!” says Falstaff, as they pause to divide the spoils. But he complains about their absent fellows: “As the prince and Poins are two arrant cowards, *there* is no equity stirring! There’s no more valour in that Poins than in a *wild duck!*”

A tall man, cloaked and masked, springs out before them. “*Your money!*” he demands in a deep, harsh voice.

“*Villains!*” growls his companion, as the two assailants’ sword-points move menacingly back and forth.

The other robbers are stunned; as they stand, amazed, the prince and Poins suddenly rush forward with angry cries, and the miscreants turn and hurry away. Struck on the behind with the flat of Poins’ blade, even Falstaff runs—abandoning the booty.

Prince Henry sheathes his sword and snatches up the sack. “Got with much ease!” he says laughing. “Now merrily to horse! The thieves are all scattered, and possessed with fear so strongly that they dare not meet *each other*—each takes his fellow for an officer!

“*Away*, good Ned! Falstaff sweats to dearth, and lards the lean earth as he walks along! Were’t not for laughing, I should pity him!” he says, untying the reins of his black steed from a sapling.

Poins laughs with him. “How the rogue *roared!*”

At home in Northumberland, Hotspur stands near a back entrance to Warkworth Castle, reading a letter—angrily.

“... *but, for mine own part, my lord, I could be well contented to be there, in respect of the love I bear your House....*”

He could be contented! Why is he not, then? In ‘respect of the love’ he bears our House! He shows in this he loves his own barn better than he loves our House!

Let me see some more. “The purpose you undertake is dangerous.”

He snorts. *Well that’s certain!—’tis dangerous to take a cold, to sleep, to drink! But I tell you, my Lord Fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower: safety!*

He reads: “*The purpose you undertake is dangerous, the friends you have named uncertain, the time itself unsorted!—and your whole plot too light for the counterpoise of so great an opposition!*”

Say you so, say you so? I say unto you again, you are a shallow, cowardly hind, and you lie!

He crumples the paper in his fist. *What a lack-brain is this! By the Lord, our plot is a good a plot as ever was laid; our friends true and constant!—a good plot—good friends, and full of expectation! An excellent plot, very good friends!*

What a frosty-spirited rogue is this! Why, my lord of York commends the plot, and the general course of action!

’Zounds, an I were now by this rascal, I could brain him with his lady’s fan! Is there not my father—my uncle and myself?—Lord Edmund Mortimer, my lord of York, and Owen Glendower? Is there not, besides, the Douglas?

Have I not all their letters to meet me in arms by the ninth of the next month? And are they not some of them set forward already?

What a pagan rascal is this! He steps inside, goes to the hearth, and tosses the letter onto the red coals. *An infidel! Hah!*

But he paces, fretting. *You shall see now: in very ‘sincerity’—of fear and cold heart—will he*

go to the king and lay open all our proceedings! Oh, I could divide myself and set the halves to blows for urging such a dish of skim milk to so honourable an action! Hang him! Let him tell the king!

And so he decides. *We are prepared! I will set forward tonight!*

His wife, Lady Elizabeth Percy, finds him.

“How now, Kate. I must leave you within these two hours,” he tells her, and thinks about his next steps.

“Oh, my good lord, why are you thus *alone*? For what offence have I this fortnight been a banished woman from my Harry’s bed? Tell me, sweet lord, what is’t that takes from thee thy appetite—*pleasure*, and thy golden sleep?

“Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth, and start so often when thou sit’st alone? Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks, and given *my* treasures in my rights of thee to thick-eyed *musings* and cursèd *melancholy*?

“In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched, and heard thee murmur tales of iron wars!—speak terms of manage to thy bounding *steed*!—cry, ‘*Courage! To the field!*’

“And thou hast talked of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents, of *palisadoes*, frontiers, parapets, of basilisks, of cannon and culverin, of prisoners’ ransom and of soldiers slain, and all the currents of a heady *fight!*”

She moves closer. “Thy *spirit* within thee hath been *at war*, and thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep that beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow like bubbles in a late-disturbèd stream; and in thy face strange motions have appeared, such as we see when men restrain their breath on some great, sudden hest!”

She grips his arm. “*Oh*, what *portents* are these? Some heavy business hath my lord in hand, and *I must know it!*—else he loves me not!”

Hotspur calls into the corridor, “*What, ho!*” A servant hurries to him. “Is Gilliams with the packet gone?”

“He is, my lord, an hour ago.”

“Hath Butler bought those horses from the sheriff?”

“One horse, my lord, he brought even now.”

“What horse? A roan, a crop-ear, is it not?”

“It is, my lord.”

“That roan shall by my throne!” cries Hotspur. “Well, I will back him straight! *Oh*, ‘*Esperance!*’” The Percys’ motto is *Esperance ma comferte*—Hope assures me.

“Bid Butler lead him forth into the park,” he tells the servant, who bows and hurries out to the stable.

“But *hear* you, my lord...”

“What say’st thou, my lady?”

“What *is* it carries you away?”

“Why, my horse, my love, my horse.”

“*Out*, you mad-headed ape! A *weasel* hath not such a deal of spleen as *you* are tossed with!” She moves to stand in front of him. “In faith, I’ll *know* your business, Harry—that I *will!* I fear my brother Mortimer doth stir about his *title*, and hath sent for you to line his enterprise! But if you go—”

“So far afoot as that I shall be *weary*, love!”

Lady Percy seizes his hand. “Come, come, you *paraquito*, answer unto me *directly* this question that I ask! In faith, I’ll break thy little *finger*, Harry, an if thou wilt not tell me all things true!”

Hotspur jerks his hand free. “Away, away, you *trifler!* *Love?* I love thee *not*; I care not about thee, Kate!—*this* is no world to play with *mammets* and to tilt with *lips!* We must have *bloody noses* and *crackèd crowns*—and pass them *current*, too!”—a jest on spending *crowns*, the coins.

He heads to the door. “God save me, *my horse!*” he shouts, urgently. He asks, drawing on his

gloves, "What say'st thou, Kate? What would'st thou have with me?"

She stares. "Do you not *love* me? Do you *not*, indeed? Well, *do* not then!—for since you love me not, I will not love myself," she pouts. She watches as he waits impatiently for his horse to be brought around. "*Do* you not love me? Nay, tell me if you speak in jest or no!"

Hotspur pulls her by the hand to the entrance. "Come, wilt thou see me ride? And when I am on *horseback*, I will swear I love thee *infinitely!* But hark you, Kate: I must not have you henceforth question me whither I go, nor the reason whereabout." Knowledge of the treasons under way is dangerous. "Whither I must, I *must!*"

"And, to conclude: this evening must I leave you, gentle Kate. I know you wise; but yet no further wise than Harry Percy's *wife*. Constant you are—but yet a *woman!* As for secrecy, no lady is more secretive—for I well believe thou wilt not utter what thou dost not *know!* And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate!"

"What?—so *far!*" she says scornfully.

"Not an inch farther! But hark you, Kate: whither I go, thither shall you go, too; today will I set forth; tomorrow, *you*. Will this content you, Kate?"

With that he dashes out, mounts the stallion, and rides away, soon at a canter.

Lady Percy, watching, murmurs, "It *must*, of force."

Chapter Four Falstaff Recounts

Near the main hearth of a huge and smoky tavern in London, Prince Henry calls to his partner in the highway prank. "*Ned*, prithee, come out of that far room, and lend me thy hand to laugh a little!"

"Where hast *been*, Hal?" asks Poins, coming through the open area for drinking and dining into one of the private chambers available to patrons, for a price.

The prince has been pursuing his study of commoners' lives. "With three or four *loggerheads* amongst three- or four-score *hogsheads!*"—several dunces who draw drink from the cellar's many barrels. "I have sounded the very *bass*-string of humility!"

"Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a *leash* of drawers"—a dog-pack of junior tapsters—"and can call them all by their christened names, as Tom, Dick, and... *Francis,*" the young lord laughs; *he* is sometimes called *Harry*. "They already take it, upon their salvation, that though I be but the *Prince* of Wales, yet I am *king* of *courtesy!*—and tell me flatly I am no *haughty Jack*, like Falstaff, but a *Corinthian*, a lad of *mettle!*—'a *good boy*, by the Lord!'—so they call me! And that when I am King of England, I shall 'commend all the good lads in Eastcheap!'"

"They call drinking deep 'dyeing scarlet,' and when you *breathe* in your watering,"—pause during a quaff, "they cry '*Amen,*' and bid you *play it off!*"—drain the mug.

"To conclude, I am so good a proficient after one-quarter of an hour that during my life I can drink with any tinker in his own language!" He laughs. "I tell thee, Ned, thou hast lost much honour that thou wert not with me in *this* sweet action!"

He hands Poins a little cloth bag, closed at the neck by string. "But, sweet Ned, to *sweeten* which named Ned, I give thee this pennyworth of *sugar*, clapped even now into my hand by an under-skinker—one that never spake English in his life—'Eight shillings and sixpence' or 'You are welcome'—other than with *this* shrill addition: '*Anon, anon, sir!* Score a pint of bastard in the Half-Moon!' or such"—the drink-fetcher's habitual assurance to waiting customers, and his call to the tapster that wine should be added to a room's running tab.

"But, Ned, to drive away the time till Falstaff come, I prithee, do thou stand in some by-room while I question my puny drawer as to what end he gave me the sugar." His smile turns mischievous. "And do thou never leave off *calling* Francis, so that his tale to me may be nothing but '*Anon!*'"

“Step aside, and I’ll show thee a precedent!”

At the entrance, Poinc calls to the bar, “Francis!”

“Thou art perfect!” the prince assures him.

Poinc cries “Francis!” again, then moves into a dark area beneath the room’s stairs, at the rear.

From the noisy tavern, the tapster’s helper hurries in, but he turns back at the door. “Anon, anon, sir!” he tells a customer. “Look down into the *Pom ’garnet*, Ralph!” he urges a fellow skinker, sending him to another private room.

The prince waves him forward. “Come hither, Francis.”

“My lord?”

“How long hast thou to serve, Francis?” he asks the harried young apprentice.

“Forsooth, five years, and as much as to—”

- “Francis!” calls Poinc, unseen.

“Anon, anon, sir!” cries the boy to the crowded bar in reply.

“Five years,” says Hal. “By’r lady, a long lease for the clinking of pewter! But, Francis, darest thou be so valiant as to play the coward with thy indenture, and show it a fair pair of *heels*?” The lad is puzzled. “And *run* from it!”

Francis wipes sweat from his forehead. “Oh, *Lord*, sir, I’ll be sworn upon all the Books in *England*, I *could* find it in my heart!”

- Poinc calls again. “Francis!”

The boy glances into the bar. “Anon, sir!”

The prince regards him. “How old art thou, Francis?”

“Let me see—about Michaelmas next I shall be—”

- “Francis!”

“Anon, sir!” The lad turns back to Hal, distressed at being away from his duties. “Pray *stay* a little, my lord—”

“Nay, but hark you, Francis: as for the sugar thou gavest me—’twas a pennyworth, was’t not?”

Francis is pleased by the mention of his gift. “Oh, *Lord*, I would it had been *two*!”

“I will give thee for it *a thousand pound*,” Prince Henry tells the boy. “Ask me whenever thou wilt, and thou shalt *have* it!”

- “Francis!”

“Anon, anon!”

The prince pretends to be annoyed by unseemly eagerness for the largess. “Anon, Francis? No, Francis, but *tomorrow*, Francis; or, Francis, o’ Thursday; or indeed, Francis, whenever thou wilt. But, Francis....”

“My lord?”

“*Wilt thou rob* that leathern-jerkin, crystal-button, knot-pated, agate-ring, puke-stocking, caddis-garter, smooth-tongue, *expanding pouch*?”

“Oh, *Lord*, sir, what do you *mean*?” asks the lad, wide-eyed at the suggestion.

Hal seems to be disappointed by the lad’s lack of ambition. “Well, then, your brown bastard is *your* only drink; for look you, Francis, your white-canvas doublet”—actually, a wine stained apron—“will *sully*! Even in *Barbary*, sir,”—among pirates, “it cannot come into so much!”

“What, sir?”

- “Francis!”

“*Away*, you rogue!” laughs the prince, as Poinc sounds another summons. “Dost thou not hear them *call*?”

Just as Francis starts to go, the tavern’s chief tapster hurries in and confronts the boy.

“*What?*—standest thou *still*, and hearest such a *calling*?” he demands angrily. “Look to the guests within!”

As the youth rushes away, the man approaches Hal. “My lord, old Sir John and half-a-dozen

more are at the door; shall I let them in?"

"Let them alone a while, and then open the door." The prince grins. "Poins!"

As the steward leaves, Poins strolls back, laughing. "*Anon, anon*, sir!"

"Sirrah, Falstaff and the rest of the thieves are at the door! Shall we be merry?"

"As merry as *crickets*,"—always fiddling, "my lad! But, hark ye: what a cunning *match* you have made with this jest on the drawer! Come, what's the *issue*?"—*What's to come of it?*

Hal is jovial, pleased that venality has not infected all of England's youth—not yet. "I am now pupil of all humours that have showed themselves humours, from the days of old goodman *Adam* up to the age of this present twelve o'clock at midnight!"

He sees Francis look in while hurrying past the door. "What's o'clock, Francis?" calls the prince.

"*Anon, anon*, sir!"

Hal joins in Poins' laughter, but shakes his head as the city-bred youngster disappears again. "That ever this fellow should have fewer words than a *parrot*!—and yet the son of a woman! His *industry* is going up stairs and down stairs—his *eloquence* the parcel of a reckoning!"—extent of a tavern-bill.

The prince is well aware that the king disapproves of his older son's mode of living. "I am not yet of Percy's mind—the *Hotspur* of the north—he that kills off some six or seven dozen of Scots at a *breakfast*, washes his hands, and says to his wife, '*Fie* upon this quiet life!—I want *work*!' 'O my sweet Harry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed today?' 'Give my roan horse a drink,' says he; then answers, 'Some fourteen an hour—a trifle, a *trifle*.'" Poins laughs.

Says Hal, "I prithee, call in Falstaff. I'll play *Percy*, and that damnèd brawn shall play *Dame Mortimer*,"—Edmund Mortimer's sister, "his wife! '*Arriba*!' says the drunkard! Call in *ribs*, call in *tallow*!"

But the knight is already at the door, with Gadshill, Bardolph and Peto. Francis follows, clasping a cluster of goblets in his left hand, two flagons of sack in the other.

"*Welcome*, Jack!" cries Poins. "Where hast thou *been*?"

Falstaff scowls at him. "A plague on all *cowards*, I say!—and a *vengeance*, too, marry and amen!

"Give me a cup of *sack*, boy! Ere I'll lead *this* life longer I'll foot *nether-socks*!—and *sew* them, and *mend* them, too! A *plague* on all *cowards*! Give me a cup of *sack*, rogue!" He downs a long draught as the boy ducks out again. "Is there no *virtue* extant?"

- Hal eyes the knight, and says quietly to Poins, "Didst thou ever see the sun kiss a dish of *butter*—how it *melted* at Titan's sweet tale? If thou didst, then behold *that* pitiful compound!"

Falstaff makes a face at the taste of adulterated wine; he scowls at Francis. "You *rogue*, here's *lime* in this sack, too!—there is nothing but *roguery* to be found in villainous *Man*!

"Yet a *coward* is *worse* than a cup of sack with lime in it!—a villainous *coward*!"

He wags his head in dismay as he takes a seat. "Go thy ways, old Jack, die when thou wilt! If *manhood*, good manhood, be not *forgot* upon the face of the earth, then am I a *skinny herring*! There live but *three* good men unchanged in *England*!—and *one* of them is fat and grows old!

"God help the while! A bad world, I say! I would I were a *weaver*!—I could sing *psalms*—or *anything*! A *plague* on all *cowards*, I say still!"

Hal claps a hand on his shoulder. "How now, wool-sack? What mutter you?"

"A *king's* son!" says Falstaff, pulling away with disgust. "If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of *lath*, and drive all thy subjects afore thee like a flock of *wild geese*, I'll never wear hair on my face more!" Again his head wags. "You—*Prince of Wales*!"

"Why, you whoreson *round man*, what's the matter?"

"Are not you a *coward*?" demands the knight. "Answer me that! And *Poins* there!"

"*Zounds*, ye fat *paunch*," cries Poins, "an ye call *me* coward, by the Lord, I'll *stab* thee!"

"I *call* thee coward? I'll see thee damned ere I call *thee*, coward!" says Falstaff, rising. "But I would give a thousand pound I could *run* as fast as thou canst!

“You are straight enough in the *shoulders*,”—look determined, “but you care not who *sees your back*! Call you *that* backing of your friends? A *plague* upon such backing!—give me them that will *face* me!

“Give me a cup of sack!” he tells Francis, thrusting forth his pewter mug. “I am a rogue if I’ve drunk today!”

“Oh, *villain!*” laughs Hal. “Thy lips are scarce wiped since thou drunkenest last!”

“All’s one for that,” says Falstaff, and he drains the wine. “A *plague* on all cowards, still say I!”

“What’s the matter?” asks Hal.

“What’s the *matter!*—there be *four* of us here have ta’en a *thousand pound* this day’s morning!”

“Where is it, Jack?” asks Hal, brightly. “Where *is* it?”

“Where is it?—*taken* from us it is!—by a *hundred* upon poor *four* of us!”

“*What?*—a hundred men?”

“I am a rogue if *I* were not at half-sword with a *dozen* of them *two hours* altogether! I have ’scaped by *miracle!* I am *eight times* thrust through the doublet, *four* through the hose; my buckler—shield—“cut through and through, my sword hacked like a *hand-saw!* *Ecce signum!*”—see the evidence, he cries, showing fresh nicks in his battered blade. “I never dealt *better* since I was a man!—*all* would not do!

“A *plague* on all *cowards!*” He nods toward the other robbers. “Let *them* speak! If they speak more or less than *truth*, they are villains and the sons of darkness!”

Hal looks at the three. “Speak, sirs; how was it?”

Gadshill replies: “We four set upon some dozen—”

“*Sixteen* at least, my lord!” insists Falstaff.

“And bound them.”

“No, no, they were not *bound*,” says Peto.

“You *rogue*,” cries Falstaff, “they *were* bound, every man of them!—or I am a *dog* else, a canine *dog!*”

Gadshill recalls the incident. “As we were sharing,”—dividing the take, “some six or seven *fresh* men set upon us—”

“And unbound the *rest*,” claims Falstaff, “and then came in the *others!*”

“What, fought you with them *all?*” asks Hal, amazed.

“*All?*” says Falstaff. “I know not what *you* call all, but if I fought not with *fifty* of them, I am a bunch of radishes! If there were not *two-* or *three-*and-fifty upon poor old Jack, then am I no two-legged creature!”

Hal looks aghast. “Pray God you have not *murdered* some of them!”

“Nay, *that’s* past praying for!” says Falstaff. “I have peppered *two* of them!—two I am *sure* I have paid!”—killed. “Two rogues *in buckram suits!*”

“I tell thee what, Hal: if I tell thee a lie, *spit* in my face—and *call* me *worse!* Thou knowest my old ward....” He moves back and crouches, demonstrating the defensive posture, and brandishing his sword. “Here I lay, and *thus* I bore my point! Four rogues in buckram let drive at me—”

“What, *four?*” says Hal. “Thou saidst but *two* even now....”

“*Four*, Hal; I told thee *four.*”

“Aye, aye, he said four,” Poinc confirms, stifling a smile.

“These four came all a-front, and manly *thrust* at me! I made me no more ado, but took all their seven points in my shield, *thus!*” he cries, swinging an arm forward gallantly.

“*Seven!*” says Hal. “Why, there were but four even now.”

“In buckram?”

“Aye, four, in buckram *suits*,” says Poinc.

“*Seven*, by these hilts, or I am a villain else!”

The prince chuckles. He tells Poins, “Prithee, let him alone; we shall have *more* anon!”

Falstaff protests, “Dost thou hear me, Hal—”

“Aye—and *mark* thee too, Jack!”

“*Do so*, for it is worth the listening to! These nine in buckram that I told thee of,—”

“So, two more *already!*” notes Hal.

“—their points’ being broken,—”

“*Down* fell their hose!” jests Poins; *points* can mean *buttons*.

“—began to give me ground! But I followed close, came *in*, foot and hand—and with a *thought*,”—instantly, “*seven* of the eleven I *paid!*” He sheathes the sword triumphantly.

“Oh, *monstrous!*” mutters the prince. “*Eleven* buckram men grown out of two!”

Falstaff persists: “But, as the Devil would have it, three misbegotten knaves in Kendal green came at my back and *let drive* toward me!—for it was so dark, Hal, that thou couldst not see thy hand!”

Prince Henry laughs. “These lies are like their father that begets them: *gross* as a *mountain*, *openly palpable!* Why, thou *clay-brained guts*, thou knotty-pated *fool*, thou whoreson, obscene, greasy tallow-catch!—”

“What, art thou mad,” cries Falstaff. “Art thou *mad?* Is not the truth the *truth?*”

“Well how couldst thou know these men in *Kendal green* when it was so dark thou couldst not see thy *hand?* Come, tell us your reasoning! What sayest thou to this?”

Poins seconds the demand. “Come, your reason, Jack, your *reason!*”

Falstaff balks, indignant. “What, upon *compulsion?* ’Zounds, an I were at the *strappado*, or all the racks in the *world,*”—instruments of torture, “I would not tell you on *compulsion!* Give you a reason on *compulsion?* If reasons were plentiful as *blackberries* I would give no man a *reason*”—he pronounces it, dryly, like *raisin*—“upon *compulsion!*”

“I’ll be no longer guilty of this sin!” cries Hal. “This sanguine *coward!*—this *bed-presser*, this *horse-back breaker*, this huge *hill of flesh!*—”

“’*Sblood*, you *starveling*, you *elf-skin*, you dried *neat’s* tongue, you bull’s *pizzle*, you *stock-fish!* Oh, for *breath* to utter what is like *thee!*” wheezes Falstaff, red-faced. “You *tailor’s-yard*, you *sheath*, you *bow case*, you vile standing-tuck!—”

“Well, breathe awhile, and then *to it* again!” the tall prince urges blithely. “And when thou hast tired thyself in base comparisons, hear me speak but *this. . .*”

“*Mark*, Jack!” cries Poins, rubbing his hands together eagerly.

Hal faces the robbers: “We two *saw* you four set on *four*; you bound them, then were masters of their wealth.

“*Mark* now, how a *plain* tale shall *put you down!* Then did *we two* set on you four—and, with a *word*, out-faced you from your prize and *had it!*—yea, and can *show it to you* here in the house!

“And, Falstaff, *you* carried your guts away as *nimbly*, with as *quick* dexterity, as ever a herded *bull-calf!*—and roared for *mercy!*—and *still* run and roar!

“What a *slave* art thou, to hack thy sword as thou hast done, and then say it was *in fight!*”

“What trick, what device, what redoubt canst thou *now* find to hide thee from this open and apparent *shame?*”

“Come, let’s *hear*, Jack!” crows Poins. “What trick hast thou *now?*”

But Falstaff merely laughs. “By the Lord, I *knew* ye as well as He that made ye!

“Why, hear you, my masters: was it for me to kill the *heir-apparent?* Should I turn upon the *true prince?*”

“Why, thou *knowest* I am as valiant as *Hercules!* But be aware of *instinct*: a *lion* will not touch the *true prince!* Now, *instinct* is a great matter; I was a ‘coward’ on *instinct!*”

“I shall think *the better* of myself, and thee, during my life,” he tells Hal nobly. “I for a valiant lion, and *thou* for a true prince!”

Hal and Poins howl with laughter at the sight of the brazen rascal, utterly unabashed in his temerity—and at the sheepish looks of the three crestfallen knaves standing with him.

Chapter Five Word of Change

But, by the *Lord*, lads, I am glad you have the *money!*" cries Falstaff. Gadshill, Bardolph and Peto concur heartily.

Standing at their entrance into the busy tavern's main room, the knight hails a woman. "Hostess, *clap the doors to! Watch tonight; pray tomorrow!*" She nods and goes. He turns to the men. "Gallants, lads, boys, hearts of gold!—all the titles of *good fellowship* come to you! What, shall we be *merry*? Shall we have a *play, extempore?*"—a skit, devised upon the moment.

"Content," says the prince. "And the topic shall be *thy running away!*"

"Ah, no more of that, Hal, an thou lovest me!"

The buxom hostess, a woman of fifty, comes back and curtsseys. She blushes. "*Oh, Jesu!*—my lord *the prince!*"

"How now, my lady *the hostess!*" says Hal not unkindly. "What sayest thou to me?"

"Marry, my lord, there is a nobleman of the *court* at door would speak with you; he says he comes from your *father!*"

Hal's disdain for the court is obvious as he opens his leather purse. "Give him as much as will *make* him a royal man,"—a *royal*, a coin worth ten shillings, "and send him back again to my *mother*" he says—as if denying bastardy; his mother died when he was a child.

"What manner of man is he?" asks Falstaff.

The hostess blinks. "An old man...."

"What doth Gravity out of his bed at midnight?" the knight wonders. "Shall *I* give him his answer?"

Hal nods. "Prithee, *do*, Jack."

"Faith, and I'll send him packing!" says Falstaff as he follows the hostess toward the king's emissary.

The prince confronts the others: "Now, sirs: by'r lady, *you fought well!*" he tells Gadshill. "So did *you*, Peto; so did *you*, Bardolph! You are lions, *too!*—you ran away upon *instinct!*—you will not touch the true *prince—no, fie!*"

Bardolph, his complexion even redder than usual, looks down. "Faith, I ran when I saw *others* run."

"In *faith*," says Hal, "tell me now in *earnest*: how came Falstaff's sword so hacked?"

"Why, he hacked it with his dagger," Peto admits, "and said he would swear *Truth* out of *England* but he would make you believe it was done in fight!—and he persuaded us to do the like."

Bardolph nods. "Yea—and to poke our noses with spear-grass to make them bleed, and then to beslobber our garments with it, and swear it was the blood of the honest men! I did what I did not this seven-year before—I *blushed* to hear his monstrous devices!"

Hal, noting Bardolph's always-ruddy complexion, laughs. "Oh, villain, thou stolest a cup of sack eighteen years ago and wert taken in the matter,"—caught doing so, "and ever *since* thou hast *blazed!* Thou hadst sword and *fire* on thy side, and yet thou rannest away!—what *instinct* hadst *thou* for it?"

Bardolph fumes. "My lord, do you see these meteors?" he demands, pointing to the other thieves' irate faces. "Do you behold these expressions?"

"I do."

"What think you they portend?"

"Hot *livers* and cold *purses*"—no share of the gold.

"*Choler*, my lord, if rightly taken."

"No, if *rightly taken*,"—caught by deputies, "*halter!*"—a *noose*. Hal sees Falstaff returning with the hostess. "Here comes *lean Jack!*—here comes *bare-bone!*"

“How now, my sweet creature of *bombast!* How long is’t ago, Jack, since thou *sawest thine own knee?*”

“My own knee? When I was about *thy* years, Hal, I was not an *eagle’s talon* in the waist; I could have crept into any alderman’s thumb-ring!” He spreads his arms, apparently in pitiable complaint: “A plague on *sighing* and *grief!*—it blows a man up like a bladder!”

But now he moves closer, and speaks gravely. “There’s *villainous news* abroad. Here was Sir John Bracy from your father; you must to the *court* in the morning!

“That same mad fellow of the north, *Percy*, and he of *Wales* who gave Amamon the *bastinado*,”—tormented a very demon, “and made Lucifer *cuckold*, then swore the *Devil* as his true liegeman upon the cross of a *Welsh hook!*”—on the shaft of the hand-weapon’s wicked blade, rather than the *Book*. Falstaff frowns. “What the plague call you him...?”

“Ah, *Glyndwr!*” replies Poins, in Welsh; the English call the nobleman *Glendower*.

“Owen, *Owen*—the *same*,” says Falstaff, “and his son-in-law *Mortimer*, and old *Northumberland*—and that sprightly Scot of Scots, *Douglas*, that runs on horseback up a hill *perpendicular!*”

“He that rides at high speed, and with his pistol kills a *flying sparrow!*” laughs Hal, mocking the skill imputed to the Douglas.

Says Falstaff, “You have hit it!”

“So did *he* never the *sparrow!*” says Prince Henry.

“Well, that rascal hath good *mettle* in him,” the knight tells him. “He will run *hot!*”

“Why, what a rascal art thou to *praise* him so for *running!*”

“O’ *horseback*, ye cuckoo!—but afoot, he will not *budge* a foot!”

Hal tauntingly disagrees: “*Yes*, Jack—upon *instinct!*”

“I grant ye, upon *instinct*,” laughs the knight. “Well, *he* is there, too; and one Mordake—and a *thousand blue-caps!*”—Scottish soldiers.

“More: *Worcester* is stolen away tonight! Thy father’s beard is *turned white* with the news!” Word apparently has spread. “You may buy *land* now as cheap as stinking *mackerel!*”—a term often used for *prostitutes*.

“Why then it is likely, if there come a hot June and this civil buffeting hold, that we shall buy *maidenheads* as they buy *hob-nails*—by the *hundreds!*” But Prince Henry now considers the imminent consequences of war.

“By the mass, lad, thou sayest true; it is likely we shall have good trading *that way*,” says Falstaff, stroking his beard; young men left at home will be few. “But tell me, Hal, art not *thou* horrible *afraid?*—thou being heir-apparent! Could the *world* pick thee out three such enemies again as that fiend *Douglas*, that spirit *Percy*, and that devil *Glendower?*”

“Art thou not horribly *afraid?* Doth not thy blood *thrill* at it?”

Henry laughs. “Not a whit! I’ faith. I lack some of thine *instinct.*”

“Well, thou wilt be *horribly chid* tomorrow, when thou comest to thy *father!* If thou love me, practice an answer.”

Hal accepts the offer. “Do thou stand for my father, and examine me upon the particulars of my life.”

“Shall I? Content.”

“This chair shall be my state,” he says, pulling it forward, “this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown.”

Prince Henry faces the fraud. “*Thy* throne is taken for a *joint-stool*, thy golden sceptre for a *leaden* dagger, and thy precious, rich crown for a pitiful *bald* crown!” Teasing Falstaff, he is also aware that many in England hold just such views regarding the king’s dubious reign.

The usurping sovereign settles happily onto the creaking seat. “An the fire of grace be not *quite* out of thee, *now* shalt thou be *moved!*” promises Falstaff the budding actor. “Give me a cup of that sack to make my eyes look red, that it may be thought I have wept; for I must speak in *passion*, and I will do it in King Cambyses’ vein”—with the bravado portrayed in a popular

theatrical tragedy.

Hal kneels before the potentate of pewter. "Well, here is my leg."

Falstaff takes a swig of wine. "And here is my speech," he says, wiping his mouth on a sleeve. "Stand aside, nobility!" The attending "courtiers" laugh.

The hostess claps her hands. "O Jesu, this is excellent sport, i' faith!"

Falstaff, head tipped back imperiously, eyes her. "*Weep not*, sweet queen," he tells the giggling woman, "for trickling tears are in vain!"

"Oh, the '*father*,'" laughs the hostess, "how he holds his countenance!"

The *king* motions to his attendants. "For God's sake, lords, convey my trustful queen," he orders, "for *tears* do stop the flood-gates of her eyes!"

"O Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harloty players as ever I seen!" says the admiring hostess.

"*Peace*, good pint-pot!" bellows Falstaff. "*Peace*, good pickle-brain!"

Now he frowns, regarding the prince dourly. "Harry, I do not only marvel *where* thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art *accompanied*! The more *camomile* is *sodden*, the faster it grows; yet, the more *youth* is so wasted, the sooner it *wears*!

"That thou art my son, I have partly thy mother's *word*, partly my own *opinion*—but chiefly a villainous trick of thine *eye* and a foolish hanging of thy nether *lip* that both warrant me." Even Hal laughs.

"If, then, thou *be* son to me, here lies the point: *why*, being son to *me*, art thou so *pointed at*? Shall a blessed son of *heaven* prove a *truant* and eat blackberries? A question *not to be asked*!" His audience laughs, of course. "Shall a son of *England* prove a *thief* and take *purses*?—a question *to be asked*!" The bandits applaud their successful adventure.

But now Falstaff glowers. "There is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of, and it is known to many in our land by the name of *pitch*! This pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth *defile*!—so doth the *company* thou keepest! For, Harry, now I do not speak to thee in drink, but in *tears*—not in pleasure, but in *anger*—not only in words, but also in *woe*!"

He wipes his dry eyes—and takes another drink. "And *yet*," he says, hopefully, "there is a *virtuous* man whom I have often noted in thy company, but I know not his name..."

"What manner of man, an it like Your Majesty?" asks Hal.

"A goodly, *portly* man, and i' faith, a corpulent; of a *cheerful* look, a pleasing eye and a most *noble* carriage; and, as I think, his age some fifty, or, by'r lady, inclining to three score—and now I remember me, his name is *Falstaff*!"

"If *that* man should be lewdly given, he deceiveth me; for, Harry, I see *virtue* in his looks! If the tree may be known by the fruit, as the fruit by the tree, then peremptorily I speak it: there is *virtue* in that Falstaff! *Him* keep with; the rest *banish*!"

"And tell me now, thou naughty varlet, *tell* me!—where hast thou *been* this month?"

Hal rises, shaking his head. "Dost thou speak like a *king*?" He motions Falstaff aside. "Do thou stand for *me*, and I'll play my father."

Cries Falstaff, rising, "*Depose* me?"—a gibe at the sorest of sensitive points. "If thou dost it half so gravely, so *majestically*, both in word and matter, *hang me up by the heels* for a still-suckling *rabbit* or a *poulter's hare*!"—one sold for its meat.

Prince Henry takes the soft crown and sharp scepter, and he assumes the scuffed-pine throne. "Well, here I am set."

"And here I stand!" Falstaff smiles at the observers: "*Judge*, my masters."

Hal narrows his eyes. "Now, Harry, whence come you?"

"My noble lord, from Eastcheap."

"The complaints I hear of thee are *grievous*."

"*Sblood*, my lord, they are *false*!" cries the knight. He comments confidently to the watchers: "Nay, I'll tickle ye for a young prince, i' faith!" He thinks Hal has been remiss in showing regal swagger.

“*Swearst thou, ungracious boy?*” scowls Henry’s offended king. “Henceforth ne’er look on me!

“Thou art violently carried away from *grace!* There is a *devil* haunts thee, in the likeness of an old, *fat man!*—a *barrel* of man is thy companion! Why dost thou converse with that *trunk full of humours*, that *bolting-hutch*”—brothel—“of *beastliness*, that swollen parcel of *dropsies*, that huge bombard of *sack*, that stuffèd-cloak *bag of guts*, that roasted Manningtree *ox* with a *bread-pudding* in its belly?—that reverend *Vice*, that grey *iniquity*, that *Father Ruffian*—that *Vanity* in years!

“Wherein is he *good* but to *taste sack?*—and *drink* it! Wherein *neat* and *cleanly* but in carving a capon to *eat* it? Wherein *cunning* but in *craft?* Wherein *crafty* but in *villainy?* Wherein *villainous* but in *all things?* Wherein *worthy* but in *nothing?*”

Falstaff feigns perplexity. “I would Your Grace would take me with you; who means Your Grace?”

“That villainous, abominable misleader of youth, *Falstaff*, that old, white-bearded *Satan!*”

“My lord, the man I *know*,—”

“I know thou *dost!*”

“—and to say I know more harm in *him* than in *myself* were to say *more* than I know!

“That he is *old*—his white hairs do witness it—the more’s the pity. But that he is, saving Your Reverence, a whoremaster, *that* I utterly deny!” He is, however, a regular customer. “If sack and sugar be a *fault*, God help the *wicked!* If to be old and *merry* be a sin, then *many* an old host that I know is *damned!* If to be fat be to be *hated*, then *Pharaoh’s* lean kind are to be *loved!*

“*No*, my good lord—banish *Peto*, banish *Bardolph*, banish *Poins!* But as for sweet Jack Falstaff, *kind* Jack Falstaff, *true* Jack Falstaff, *valiant* Jack Falstaff—being, as he is, *old* Jack Falstaff, therefore *more* valiant—banish not *him* from thy Harry’s company!

“Banish plump *Jack*, and banish all this *world!*”

The prince, sober and aware that dawn is drawing near; rises and says, quietly, “I do. I will.” But the commoners are applauding and laughing, moving closer to clap the pretend Hal on the back.

Loud, insistent knocking draws away the hostess, followed by Bardolph. The bandit soon returns. “Oh, my lord, my *lord!* The *sheriff*, with a most monstrous *watch*,”—several deputies, “is at the door!”

The knight, quite drunk now, waves him away. “*Out*, ye rogue! Play out the *play!*—I have much to say in the behalf of that Falstaff!”

But the hostess now comes back, very distressed. “O Jesu—my lord, my *lord!*”

“*Heigh, heigh*,” cries Hal, “the devil rides upon a *fiddlestick!*” But he does ask, “What’s the *matter?*”

“The *sheriff* and all the *watch* are at the door! They are come to *search the house!* Shall I let them in?”

Falstaff is becoming concerned. “Dost thou hear, Hal!” he urges. “*Thou* art essentially made,”—a privileged patrician, “without *seeming* so! But never call on a *counterfeit* for a true piece of gold!” He and the others, with no special protection, wish to avoid the law’s scrutiny.

Hal regards him. “And *thou* a *natural* coward—without *instinct!*”

“I *deny* your major!”—main argument, says the knight. “And if you will, deny the *sheriff* so!

“If not, let him enter. If I become not a *cart* as well as another man,”—fail to ride with dignity to the gallows, “a plague on my bringing up!” he says proudly. “I’m sure I shall as soon be *strangled* with a halter as *another*,” he adds—managing to look quite pathetic.

Hal motions him away. “*Go*, hide thee behind the arras. The rest walk up above.” As Falstaff stumbles toward the heavy drapery, the other men climb the stairs and enter a smaller room; the prince holds back Poins. “*Now*, my masters, for a true *face!*” He straightens his doublet. “And *good conscience.*”

“Both of which I have *had*,” claims Falstaff, “but their date is out; and therefore I’ll hide

me!” He steps behind a thick, smoke-darkened tapestry hanging beside the wall.

“Call in the sheriff,” the prince tells the hostess.

After a moment, the officer approaches the door—with Tom, the carrier.

The prince nods to the two. “Now, master Sheriff, what is your will with me?”

The sheriff bows politely. “First, pardon me, my lord. A hue and cry hath followed certain men unto this house....”

“What men?”

“One of them is well known, my gracious lord—a gross, *fat* man.”

“As *fat* as *butter!*” adds Tom, who has described the thieves he met on the highway.

Hal is calm. “The man, I do assure you, is not *here*, for I myself at this time have employed him. And, Sheriff, I engage my word to thee that I will, by tomorrow noon-time, send him to answer thee, or any man, for anything he shall be charged withal.

“And so let me entreat you to leave the house.”

“I will, my lord,” says the sheriff. He looks at the prince—and speaks in accordance with their custom: “There are two gentlemen who have in this robbery lost three hundred marks....”

“It may be so; if he have robbed these men, he shall be answerable. And so farewell.”

The sheriff bows again, relieved; the prince will make amends, despite the size of the loss. “Good night, my noble lord.”

“I think it is good *morrow*, is it not?”

“Indeed, my lord, I think it be two o’clock.” The sheriff and the carrier go, passing back through the tavern.

Prince Henry laughs. “This oily rascal is known as well as *Paul’s!*”—London’s massive Saint Paul’s Cathedral. “Go call him forth.”

“Falstaff!” says Poins. He pulls back the drape. “*Fast asleep* behind the arras—and snoring like a horse!”

“Hark how hard he fetches breath!” says Hal, watching. “Search his pockets.” Poins does so, extracting several notes. “What hast thou found?”

“Nothing but papers, my lord.”

“Let’s see what they be; read them.”

Poins selects one, a hostelry bill. “*Item*, a capon, 2 shillings, 2 pennies. *Item*, sauce, 4 pennies....” He grins: “*Item*, sack, two gallons, 5 shillings, 8 pennies.” He glances down the list. “*Item*, anchovies and sack after supper, 2 shillings, 6 pennies. *Item*, bread, a half-penny....”

“Oh, monstrous!” laughs Hal. “But one half-penny-worth of *bread* to this intolerable deal of *sack!*”

“What there is else, keep close,” he tells Poins. “We’ll read it at more advantage. There let him sleep till day.”

He considers the news of rebellious northerners and their Welsh and Scottish allies. “I’ll to the court in the morning. We must all go to the wars, and *thy* place shall be honourable,” he pledges. He looks down at the knight. “I’ll procure this fat rogue a charge of *foot*,”—command of an infantry company, “and I know the march of twelve-score miles will be his death!”

The prince remembers the sheriff’s words. “The money shall be paid back again with advantage”—interest. Poins nods; later, he will take it to the sheriff.

“Be with me betimes in the morning. And so, good morrow, Poins.”

The gentleman watches as the prince sweeps his plumed hat from a peg and strides away. “Good *morrow*, good my lord!”

Chapter Six Rebels Meet

Edmund Mortimer, the fifth Earl of March—and arguably heir to Richard II’s throne—leads the rebellion’s other chiefs into a candle-lit room of a mansion in northwestern Wales. “These promises are *fair*,” he tells them, “the parties *sure*, and our induction full of prosperous *hope*!”

Hotspur is eager to conclude the agreement. “Lord Mortimer, and cousin Glendower, will you sit down? And Uncle Worcester.” He looks at the table. “A plague upon it!—I have forgot the *map*!”

“No, here it is,” says Glendower, patriarchal commander of the Welsh forces. “Sit, cousin Percy—sit, good cousin *Hotspur*!—for by *that* name, as oft as Lancaster doth speak of you his cheek looks pale, and with a rising sigh he wisheth you in heaven!”—dead. The Duke of Lancaster now reigns as King Henry IV.

Hotspur grins. “And you in *hell*, as oft as he hears Owen Glendower spoke of!”

“I cannot blame him,” says the powerful and legendary leader. “At my nativity, the front of heaven was full of *fiery shapes*, of *burning cressets*!—and at my birth, the frame and huge foundation of the *earth* shook like a coward!”

Hotspur scoffs. “Why, so it would have done at the same season if your mother’s *cat* had but kitted, though yourself had never been born.”

Glendower, surprised and affronted, glares. “I say *the earth did shake* when I was born!”

“And I say the earth was not of *my* mind, if you suppose it shook as *fearing* you.”

“The heavens were all *on fire*!” insists Glendower. “The *earth did tremble*!”

“Well then the *earth* shook to see the *heavens* on fire,” replies Hotspur, “and not in fear of your nativity. Diseasèd nature oftentimes breaks forth in strange eruptions; oft the teeming earth is with a kind of *colic* pinched, and vexèd by the imprisoning of unruly *wind* within her womb—which, for enlargement striving, shakes the old Beldam Earth, and topples down steeples and moss-grown towers.

“At your birth our Grandam Earth, having *this* distemperature,”—flatulence, “in passion shook.”

Glendower reddens with anger; much of his followers’ devotion stems from his mystical menace. “Cousin, I do not bear these *crossings* from *many* men! Give me leave to tell you once *again* that at my birth the front of heaven was full of *fiery shapes*!—the goats ran from the mountains, and the herds went strangely clamorous into the frightened fields!

“These signs have marked me *extraordinary*!—and all the courses of my *life* do show I am not in the roll of common men!

“Where is he living, clipped in by the sea that chides the banks of England, Scotland, Wales, that calls me *pupil*, or hath *read* to me? And bring him out that is but woman’s son who can trace *me* in the difficult ways of art, and hold my pace in *deep experiments*!”—supernatural ability.

Hotspur regards him. “I think there’s no man speaks better *Welsh*,” he allows, dryly. “I’ll to dinner,” he says, starting away.

Lord Mortimer grasps his arm. “*Peace*, cousin Percy!” he urges quietly. “You will make him *mad*!”

“I can call *spirits* from the vasty *deep*!” cries Glendower.

Hotspur shrugs. “Why, so can I, or so can *any* man—but will they *come* when you do call for them?”

“I can teach you, Cousin, to *command the Devil*!”

“And I can teach *thee*, Coz, to *shame* the Devil by telling *truth*!” retorts Hotspur, referring to the adage. “‘Tell truth and shame the Devil!’ If thou have power to raise him, *bring him hither*—and I’ll be sworn *I* have power to shame him *hence*! Oh, while you live, tell *truth*, and *shame* the

Devil!”

Mortimer steps between them. “Come, *come*,” he says, soothingly, “no more of this unprofitable chat!”

Proud Glendower still fumes. “*Three times* hath Henry Bolingbroke made head”—led an army—“against my power! *Thrice* from the banks of Wye and sandy-bottomed Severn have I *sent him bootless home*—and weather-beaten *back!*”

“Home without boots, and in foul weather, too!” laughs Hotspur scornfully. “How ’scapes he *agues*,”—chills and fever, “in the Devil’s name?”

Glendower, noting Mortimer’s concern for the uneasy alliance, performs a genuinely extraordinary feat: he suppresses his anger. “Come, here’s the map,” he says, going to the table. He unrolls the paper and spreads it out. “Shall we divide our right, according to our threefold order ta’en?”

Mortimer explains the river-bounded agreement proposed by a Welsh cleric: “The archdeacon hath divided it into three limits very equally: England from Trent and Severn hitherto, by south and east is to my part assignèd; all westward, Wales beyond the Severn shore, and all the fertile land within that bound, to Owen Glendower; and, dear coz,” he tells Hotspur, “to you the remnant northward, lying off from Trent.

“And as our indentures tripartite are drawn, which being sealèd interchangeably—a business that this night may execute—tomorrow, cousin Percy, you and I and my good lord of Worcester will set forth to meet your father”—Northumberland and his forces—“and the Scottish power, as is appointed us, at Shrewsbury.

“My wife’s father, Glendower, is not ready yet, nor shall we need his help these fourteen days.

“Within that space,” he tells the Welsh lord, “you may have drawn together your tenants, friends, and neighbouring gentlemen”—to complete the rebels’ army.

Glendower smiles. “A *shorter* time shall send me to you, lords; and in my conducting shall your *ladies* come—from whom you now must steal and take no leave, for there will be a *world of water*”—tears—“shed upon the parting of your wives and you!”

Hotspur is studying the map. “Methinks *my* moiety, north from Burton, here, in quantity equals not one of yours!” He points. “See how this river comes pranking me in, and cuts out from the best of all my land a *huge half-moon*, a monstrous *cantle!*”—saddle-ridge.

He taps the paper. “I’ll have the current in *this* place dammed up!—and *here* the smug and silver Trent shall run in a *new* channel, fairly and evenly!—it shall not wind with such a deep indent, to rob me of such rich bottoms here!”

Glendower frowns, looking at the charted turns in the river Trent. “Not *wind*? It shall!—it *must!*—you see it *doth!*”

Mortimer examines the map. “Yea, but mark how it bears *this* course, and runs *me* up with *like* disadvantage—gelding the opposèd continent as much as on the *other* side as it takes from you,” he tells Hotspur.

The old Earl of Worcester points calmly. “Yea; but a little change will trench it here, and on this north side win this cape of land; and then it runs straight and even.”

“I’ll *have* it so!” says Hotspur. “A little change will do it!”

Glendower shakes his head. “I’ll not have it altered.”

“*Will* not you?” cries Hotspur angrily.

“*No!*—nor *you* shall not!”

“Who shall say me nay?”

“Why, that will *I!*”

“Let me *not understand* you, then!” warns Hotspur. “Speak it in *Welsh!*”

Glendower scoffs. “I can speak English, lord, as well as you; for I was trainèd up in the English court, where, being but young, I framèd to the harp many an English ditty *lovely* well, and gave the tongue a *helpful ornament*—a virtue that was never seen in *you!*”

“Marry, and I am *glad* of it with all my heart!” cries Hotspur. “I had rather be a *kitten* and cry *mew!* than one of these same *metre-ballad* mongers! I had rather hear a brazen candlestick *ground*, or a dry wheel grate on the *axle-tree!*—and that would set my teeth on edge nothing so much as mincing *poetry!* ’Tis like the forcèd gait of a *shuffling nag!*”

Glendower, ignoring the petulance in favor of the shift in topic from Welsh to poetry, sighs. “Come, you shall *have* Trent turned,” he says—certain that the headstrong young lord will, in the end, fail—or neglect—to change the river’s course.

His pride required making a demand; but now Hotspur feels a bit ridiculous. “I do not care. I’ll *give thrice* so much land to any well-deserving *friend*; but in the way of *bargain*, mark ye me, I’ll cavil on the ninth part of a *hair!*”

“Are the indentures drawn? Shall we be gone?” He wants to get on the road now, to be moving toward his father’s approaching force of English troops.

“The moon shines fair; you may away by night,” says Glendower. The shrewd lord wants no carping later; the land-parceling document will be revised and signed now. “I’ll hasten the writer, and withal break to your wives the news of your departure hence.”

As he leaves, he smiles at his new son-in-law. “I am afraid my daughter will run mad, so much she doteth on her Mortimer!”

The English earl waits until he’s out of earshot. “*Fie*, cousin Percy! How you *cross* my father-in-law!”

“I cannot choose!” says Hotspur, who despises sentiment—and any fantasy other than his own. “Sometime he angers me with telling me of the *mole* and the *ant*, of the dreamer *Merlin* and his *prophecies*, and of a *dragon* and a *finless fish*, a clip-winged *griffin* and a moulting *raven*, a couching *lion* and a ramping *cat*—and such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff as puts me from my *faith!*”

“I tell you what: he held me last night at least *nine hours* in reckoning up the several devils’ names that were his lackeys! I said ‘*Hmm,*’ and ‘*Well, go on,*’ but marked him not a *word!* Oh, he is as *tedious* as a *tired horse*—worse than a *railing wife* or a *smoky house!* I had rather live with *cheese* and *garlic* in a *windmill*, *far*, than feed on *cakes* and have *him* talk to me in any summer-house in Christendom!”

“In faith, he is a *worthy* gentleman,” protests Mortimer, “exceedingly well read, and profited in strange concealments!”—possessed of valuable arcane secrets. “Valiant as a lion, and as wondrous affable and bountiful as *mimes of India!*”

“Shall I tell you, Cousin?—in a high respect he holds *your* temper, and *curbs* himself even of his natural scope when you come to *cross* his humour!—’faith, he *does!* I warrant you, that man is not alive who might so have tempted him as *you* have done without the taste of *danger* in *reproof!*”

“But *do not use it oft*, let me entreat you!”

Worcester tells his nephew, “In faith, my lord, you *are* to blame—too *willful!*—and since your coming hither have done *enough* to put him quite beside his patience!”

“You must needs learn, lord, to amend this fault! Though sometimes it show greatness, courage, blood—and that’s the dearest grace it renders you—yet oftentimes it doth present harsh *rage*, defective *manners*, want of *government!*—pride, haughtiness, opinion and *disdain!*—the *least* of which haunting a nobleman loseth men’s hearts, and leaves behind a stain upon the beauty of all parts besides, beguiling them of commendation.”

“Well, I am *schooled!*” mutters Hotspur. “Good *manners* be *your* speed!” He sees that Glendower is bringing the ladies to say farewell. “Here come our wives; let us take our leave.”

Mortimer moans as his wife and Lady Percy arrive. “This is the deadly spite that angers *me*: my wife can speak no English, I no Welsh!”

“My daughter weeps,” notes Glendower, as she throws her arms around Mortimer’s neck, sobbing. “She will not *part* with you; *she’ll* be a soldier, too!—she’ll to the wars!”

Mortimer kisses her tenderly. “Good father, tell her that she and Lady Percy shall speedily

follow, in your conduct!”

Glendower speaks to her in Welsh, and she answers him in the same.

“She is *desperate*, here,” says Glendower, “a peevish, self-willed, coltish one that no persuasion can do good upon!” The lady comments further—vehemently.

Mortimer looks sadly into her tear-filled eyes. “I understand thy *looks!*—that pretty Welsh which thou pour’st down from *these* swelling heavens I am only *too* perfect in!—and, but for shame, in such a ‘parley’ should I *answer* thee!”—with tears of his own.

She speaks again.

“I understand thy *kisses*,” he says, “and thou mine, and that’s a *feeling* disputation! But I will never be a truant, love, till I have learned thy language!—for *thy* tongue makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penned, sung to her lute by a fair queen in a summer’s bower, with ravishing diversion!”

Glendower watches them. “Nay, if *you* melt, then will she run mad!” warns the warrior.

Lady Mortimer speaks again.

“*Oh*, I am *ignorance itself* in this!” groans her spouse in frustration.

Her father quietly explains: “She bids you on the wanton rushes lay you down, and rest your gentle head upon her lap, and she will sing the song that pleaseth you, and on your eyelids crown the god of sleep, charming your blood with pleasing heaviness, making such difference ’twixt wake and sleep as is the divergence betwixt day and night, in the hour before the heavenly harnessed team begins its golden progress in the east.”

Mortimer happily takes both of her hands. “With all my heart I’ll sit and hear her sing! By that time will our book, I think, be drawn,” he notes mournfully. A scribe is putting the lords’ final agreement into writing.

“Do so,” smiles Glendower, eyes twinkling. “And those musicians that shall play to you hang in the air a thousand leagues from hence—but straight they shall be *here!* Sit, and attend....”

Hotspur watches as the couple seat themselves. “Come, Kate, *thou* art perfect in *lying* down!” he tells his wife, not to be outdone. “*Come*—quick, *quick*, that I may lay my head in thy lap!”

Lady Percy blushes. “*Go*, ye giddy goose!”

In the next room, musicians—transported here not by magic, now, but on horseback yesterday, with Lord Glendower—play softly.

Hotspur pulls Elizabeth down by the hand to sit beside him. “Now I perceive the *Devil* understands Welsh!—and ’tis no marvel he is so moody! By’r lady, *he* is a good musician!”

“Then should *you* be nothing but *musical*,” says Elizabeth, “for you are *altogether* governed by humours! Lie still, ye thief, and hear the lady sing in Welsh.”

Mortimer’s bride renders a sweet ballad, well accompanied by the music.

- Hotspur leans closer to his wife, “I had rather hear *Lady*, my brach”—a hound—“*howl* in *Irish!*”

- She warns, looking around, “Wouldst thou have thy head broken?”

- “No.”

- “Then *be still!*”

- “Never!—’tis a *woman*’s fault!”

- “Now God help thee!”

- “To the Welsh lady’s *bed!*” he replies, gaping at the lovely singer.

- Elizabeth pushes him away. “What’s *that?*”

- “*Peace*,” he laughs, “she sings.”

Lady Mortimer provides another melody.

Hotspur elbows his young wife. “Come, Kate, I’ll have *your* song, too!” he says, craving attention.

“Not *mine*, in good sooth!”

Hotspur mocks her daintiness: “Not *yours*, ‘in good *sooth!*’ Heart, you swear like a *comfit*-maker’s wife! Not *you*, ‘in good sooth,’ and ‘as true as I live,’ and ‘as God shall mend me,’ and

‘as sure as day’—and givest such sarcenet surety”—soft, silky assurance—“for thy *oaths* as if thou never walk’st further than Finsbury!”—were utterly inexperienced.

He grins. “Swear me, Kate, like a lady as thou art, a good, *mouth-filling* oath!—and leave ‘in sooth,’ and such protest of peppered *gingerbread* to velvet guards and Sunday citizens!

“Come, *sing!*”

“I will *not* sing! ’Tis the nearest way to turn *tailor* or to be *red-breast’s* teacher!”—to hum and chirp, she says stubbornly.

Hotspur stands. “If the indentures be drawn, I’ll away within these two hours,” he tells the others. He looks down at Kate. “And so come in when ye will.” He stalks off, leaving the room.

“Come, come, Lord Mortimer,” Glendower tells the young Englishman, “you are as *slow* as hot Lord Percy is on fire to *go!*”

“By now our book is drawn; we’ll but seal, and then to horse immediately!”

King Richard’s hopeful heir rises to his feet, ready, now, to begin the venture. “With all my heart!”

Chapter Seven Old Discontents, New Roles

“Lords, give us leave,” a troubled King Henry tells the noblemen called to the palace in London. “The Prince of Wales and I must have some private conference.” The peers begin to move toward the door. “But be near at hand,” he calls, “for we shall presently have need of you!” War is looming.

Henry regards his son disdainfully. “I know not whether *God* will have it so, for some displeasing service I have done, that, in his secret doom, out of my blood he’ll breed *revenge* and a *scourge* for me!—but *thou* dost in thy passages of life make me believe that thou art markèd only for hot *vengeance*—as the rod of Heaven to *punish* my mistreadings!

“Tell me, *how else* could such inordinate and *low* desires, such poor, such base, such lewd, such *common* attempts, such barren pleasures and rude society as thou art matched withal, and grafted to, accompany the greatness of thy blood, and hold their level with thy *princely* heart?”

His son faces him squarely. “So please Your Majesty, I would I could acquit myself of *all* offences with as clear excuse as I can doubtless purge me of many I am *charged* withal!

“Yet such extenuation let me beg, in reproof of many *devisèd* tales, which oft the ear of greatness needs must hear, from smiling pick-thanks and base news-mongers. Then, for some things *true* wherein my youth hath faulty and irregular wandered, I may find *pardon* in my true submission.”

“*God* pardon thee!” cries Henry angrily. “Yet let *me* wonder, Harry, at thy *affections*—which do hold a wing quite *from* the flight of all thy ancestors! Thy place in Council, which by thy younger brother is supplied, thou hast rudely *lost*—and art almost an *alien* to the hearts of all the court, and princes of my blood! The hope in expectation of thy time”—as king—“is *ruined*, and the soul of every man prophetically doth forethink thy fall!”

He paces, frowning in annoyance. “Had *I* so lavish of my presence been—so commonly hackneyed in the eyes of men, so stale and cheap to vulgar company!—*opinion*, that did help me to the *crown*, had still kept loyal to its possessor, and left me in reputeless *banishment*, a fellow of neither mark nor likelihood!

“By being *seldom* seen, I could not stir but that like a *comet* I was *wondered* at!—and men would tell their children, ‘*This is he!*’—others would say, ‘*Where!*—which is *Bolingbroke?*’

“And then I stole all courtesy from *heaven*, and *dressed* myself in such humility that I did pluck allegiance from men’s hearts, loud shouts and salutations from their mouths!—even in the presence of the crownèd *king!* Thus did I keep my presence fresh and new—my person, like a robe pontifical, ne’er seen but *wondered* at! And so *my state*, seldom but *sumptuous*, showed like

a *feast!*—and won by *rareness* such solemnity!”

He remembers Richard with contempt. “The skipping king, he ambled up and down with shallow *jesters* and rash *twigs of wit*—soon kindled and soon *burnt!*—*diluted* his state, mingled his royalty with capering *fools*, had his great name profaned by their scorns; and gave his *countenance*, despite his name, to laughing, gibing *boys!* And, yielding to the push of every beardless, vain comparer, grew a companion to the *common streets!*—enfeoffed himself to *popularity*, being daily swallowed by men’s eyes such that they *surfeited* with honey and began to loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof little more than a little is by much *too* much!

“So when he had *occasion* to be seen, he was but as the cuckoo is in June: heard, not *regarded!* Seen—but eyes sick and blunted with *communing* afforded no extraordinary gaze such as is bent on sun-like *majesty* when it shines *seldom* into admiring eyes, but rather drowzed and hung their lids down—*slept* before his *face!*—and, being with his presence glutted, gorged and *full*, rendered such aspect as lofty men show to their *adversaries!*”—contemptuous expressions.

He stops. “And in that very line, Harry, standest *thou!*—for thou has lost thy *princely* privilege with vile *participation!*”

“Not an eye but is *a-weary* of thy common sight!—save *mine*, which hath desired to see thee *more,*” he adds, his voice cracking, as tears well up. “Which now doth what I would not have it do: make blind itself with foolish tenderness....” He turns away.

“I shall hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, be more my self,” says the prince softly.

Henry regards him, frustration and disappointment apparent in his face. “To this hour thou art for all the world as was *Richard* then, when I from France set foot at Ravenspurgh!”—returned from exile. “And even as *I* was then is *Percy* now!”

“Now, by my sceptre, and my soul to boot, he hath more *worthy* interest unto the state”—claim on the crown—“than *thou*, in the shadow of *succession!* For with no *right*, nor colour *like* to right, he doth *fill fields with harness!*—in the realm turns head against the *lion’s* armed jaws; and, being no more in debt to years than *thou*, but bruited *arms*, leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on to *bloody battles!*”

“What never-dying honour *he* hath got against renowned *Douglas!*—whose high deeds, whose hot incursions and great name in arms hold, among all soldiers’ majority, chief *military* title!—capital through all the kingdoms that acknowledge Christ!

“*Thrice* hath this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes, this infant warrior, in his enterprises discomfited great Douglas—*taken* him once!—*freed* him, and made a *friend* of him—to fill up the mouth of *deep defiance*, and shake the peace and safety of *our throne!*”

He resumes pacing, speaking feverishly. “And what say you to *this?* Percy, Northumberland, his *grace* the Archbishop of York, Douglas and Mortimer *cooperate!*—*against us!*—and are *up!*”—risen in arms.

“But wherefore do I tell these news to *thee?* *Why,* Harry, do I tell *thee*, who art my near’st and dearest *enemy*, about my foes?” he demands angrily. “*Thou* that art likely enough, through vassal *fear*, *base* inclination, and a start of *whimsy*, to fight *against* me under *Percy’s* pay!—to dog his heels and curtsy at his frowns, to show how much thou art *degenerate!*”

“*Do not think so!*” says Prince Henry earnestly. “You shall not *find* it so! And God *forgive* them that so much have swayed Your Majesty’s good thoughts away from me!

“I will *redeem* all of this *on Percy’s head!*—and, at the closing of some glorious day, be bold to tell you that *I am your son!* Then will I wear a garment all of blood and stain, my features in a bloody mask, which, washed away, shall scour my shame *with it!*”

Now he, too, is moved by anger. “And that shall be the day, whene’er it alights, that this same child of honour and renown, this gallant *Hotspur*, this all-*praised* knight and your unthought-of Harry chance to *meet!*”

“For every *honour* sitting on his helm, I would there were *multitudes*, and on *my* head my shames *redoubled!*—for the time will come that I shall make this northern youth *exchange* his praises for my indignities! Percy is but my *factor,*”—agent, “good my lord, engrossing up

glorious deeds *on my behalf!*—and I will call him to so strict accounting that he shall *render up every glory!*—yea, even the *slightest* worship of his time!—or I will *tear* the reckoning *from his heart!*

“This in the name of God I *promise* here!—which, if He be pleased I shall perform, I do beseech Your Majesty may salve the long-grown wounds of my intemperance!”

The prince kneels. “If not, the end of life cancels all bands—and I will die *a hundred thousand* deaths ere break the smallest parcel of this vow!”

Happily wiping away tears, King Henry touches his son’s shoulder. “A hundred thousand *rebels* die in *this!*” He grasps the prince’s hand, urging him to rise. “Thou shalt have charge”—assignment of troops—“and sovereign trust herein!” he pledges.

A knight hurries in, clearly much distressed. “How now, good Blunt?” asks the king, expecting further news of the rebellion. “Thy looks are full of *speed.*”

Sir Walter strides to him and bows. “So hath the business need that I come to speak of!

“Lord Mortimer of Scotland hath sent word that Douglas and the English rebels *combined*, the eleventh of this month, at Shrewsbury! As mighty and dreadful a head they are, if promises be kept on every hand, as ever offered foul play in the state!”

Henry nods, and tells him, calmly, “The Earl of Westmoreland sets forth today, and with him my son Lord John of Lancaster; for this information is five days old.”

The king turns to the prince. “On Wednesday next, Harry, *you* shall set forward; on Thursday we *ourselves* will march. Our meeting is Bridgenorth”—on the Severn, just twenty miles from Shrewsbury.

“And, Harry, you shall march through Gloucestershire, in order to mount our valued forces! Some twelve days hence, all our generals at Bridgenorth shall meet!

“Our hands are full of business! Let’s *away!*”

“Advantage *feeds himself fat* while men delay!”

Falstaff is sullen this morning. “Bardolph, am I not fallen away vilely since this last action? Do I not *abate?*—do I not *dwindle?* Why, my skin hangs about me like an old lady’s loose *gown!*—I am withered like an old *apple-john!*”

Sitting beside him at the table, Bardolph listens silently, but with a wry smile, as Falstaff—plump as ever—moans.

“Well, I’ll *repent!*—and that *immediately*, while I am in some liking; I shall be out of heart shortly, and then I shall have no *strength* to repent.” But the knight shakes his head mournfully. “If I have not forgotten what the inside of a *church* is made of, I am a peppercorn, a brewer’s horse!” He frowns, trying to remember. “The *inside* of a church....”

He gazes toward the familiar bar, now vacant, in the Eastcheap tavern. “Company, *villainous* company, hath been the spoil of me!”

Bardolph regards him with mock sorrow. “Sir John, you are so fretful you cannot live long.”

“Why, there is it,” sighs Falstaff. “Come, sing me a bawdy song; make me merry!”

“I was as virtuously given as a gentleman *need* be: virtuous *enough*: swore *little*; diced not above seven times a week; went to a bawdy-house once in a quarter—of an *hour*; repaid money that I borrowed—*three* of four times; lived well, and in good compass.

“And now I live *out* of all order, *out* of all compass!”

Bardolph laughs. “Why, you are so *fat*, Sir John, that you *must needs* be out of all compass, out of all *reasonable* compass, Sir John!”

“Do *thou* amend thy *face,*” retorts the knight, “and I’ll amend my life! Thou art our *admiral*: thou bearest the *lantern* at the poop-deck—but ’tis in the *nose* of thee!” he tells the man of bright red complexion. “Thou art the Knight of the Burning Lamp!”

Bardolph rubs his bulbous beak sheepishly. “Why, Sir John, my face does you no harm....”

The knight concurs: “So I’ll be sworn! I make as good use of it as many a man doth of a *Death’s-head* or a *memento mori!*—I never see thy face but I think upon *hell-fire*, and of *Dives*,

who thus lived in *purple*—for there he *is*,” says Falstaff, pointing at the nose, “in his robes, *burning, burning!*” The parable’s wealthy man was condemned to eternal flames for letting a beggar starve at his gate.

Falstaff leans back, studying the features of his companion in carousing. “If thou wert in any way given to *virtue*, I would *swear* by thy face: my oath should be, ‘*by this fire, that’s God’s angel!*’

“But thou art altogether *given over*, and wert indeed, but for the light in thy *face*, the son of utter darkness! When thou rannest up Gad’s Hill in the night to catch my horse, if I did not think thou hadst been an *ignis fatuus* or a ball of wildfire, there’s no purchase in money!

“Oh, thou art a perpetual *match*, to light for Triumph an everlasting *bonfire!*”

“Thou hast saved me *a thousand marks* in flares and torches, walking with thee in the night betwixt tavern and tavern. But the *sack* that thou hast drunk me”—healths, at Falstaff’s expense—“would have bought me lights as good, and as *cheaply*, at the dearest chandler’s in *Europe!*”

“I have maintained that *salamander*”—blaze-dweller—“of yours with fire any time this *two and thirty years*, God reward me for it!”

Bardolph mopes. “‘Sblood, I would ‘my face’ were in your belly!”—wish the topic had been contained.

“God ’a’ mercy, so should I be sure to be *heart-burned!*” cries Falstaff. He looks up as the hostess comes to their table. “How now, Dame Partlet the hen! Have you inquired yet who picked my pocket?”

She is indignant. “Why, Sir *John!* What do you *think*, Sir John?—do you think I keep *thieves* in my house? I have searched; I have *inquired*—so has my husband, man by man, boy by boy, servant by servant! The *tithe of a hair* was never lost in my house before!”

“Ye *lie*, hostess: Bardolph was shaved and lost *many* a hair—and I’ll be sworn my *pocket* was *picked!* Go to; you are a *woman!*”—a disparaging term, as opposed to *lady*. “Go to!”

“Who, *I? No!*—I *defy* thee! God’s light, I was never called so in mine own house before!”

Falstaff waves her away. “Go to, I know you well enough.”

“*No*, Sir John; you do *not* know me, Sir John!—I know *you*, Sir John! You owe me *money*, Sir John—and now you pick a quarrel to *beguile* me of it!” She faces him, glowering, her little fists on wide hips. “I bought you a dozen of shirts for your back!”

“*Dowlas*,”—cheap linen, “filthy *dowlas!*” he replies. “I have *given them away—to bakers’ wives*, and they have made *bolters*”—sifting cloths—“of them!”

“Now, as I am a true woman, *holland*, of eight shillings an ell!”—fine-quality, costly cloth, the hostess counters angrily. “You owe money here besides, Sir John, for your meals and by-drinkings, and money *lent* you: *four and twenty pound!*”

Falstaff points to Bardolph. “He had his part of it; let *him* pay.”

“*He?* Alas, he is poor; he hath nothing!”

“What? *Poor?* Look upon his *face*; what call you *rich?* Let them coin his *nose*, let them coin his *cheeks!*”

“I’ll not pay a denier,” he insists. “*What*, will you make a *younker*”—bumpkin—“of me? Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn but I shall have my *pocket* *picked?* I have lost a seal-ring of my grandfather’s worth *forty marks!*”

The hostess turns to Bardolph. “*Oh, Jesu!*—I have heard the prince tell him, I know not how oft, that the ring was *copper!*”

Falstaff scoffs. “What? The prince is a *Jack*, a *sneak-cup!*” He brandishes his cudgel.

“‘Sblood, an he were here, I would beat him like a *dog* if he would say so!”

At that very moment Prince Henry and Poins enter the tavern—in military apparel. Falstaff waves the heavy stick to greet Hal jovially. “How now, lad? Is the wind in *that* door, i’ faith?—must we all *march?*”

“Yea, two by two,” mutters Bardolph, “*Newgate* fashion!”—as do shackled convicts in that

prison.

The hostess approaches Hal. "My lord, I pray you, *hear me!*"

"What sayest thou, Mistress Quickly? How doth thy husband? I love him well; he is an honest man."

"Good my lord, hear me—"

Falstaff rises. "Prithee, let her alone, and list to *me!*"

"What sayest thou, Jack?"

"The other night I fell asleep here behind the arras, and had my *pocket picked!* This house is turned *bawdy-house!*—they *pick pockets!*"

"What didst thou lose, Jack?"

"Wilt thou believe me, Hal, three or four *bonds* of forty pound apiece!—and a *seal-ring* of my grandfather's!"

Prince Henry shrugs. "A *trifle*, some eight-penny matter."

"So I *told* him, my lord," cries the hostess, "and I said I heard *Your Grace* say so! *And*, my lord, he speaks most vilely of you, like the foul-mouthed man as he is, and said he would *cudgel* you!"

"What?" says Prince Henry, feigning surprise. "He did not!"

She nods vigorously: "There's neither faith, truth, nor womanhood in me *else!*"

Falstaff sneers. "There's no more faith in *thee* than in a stewed *prune*; nor no more *truth* in thee than in a drowned *fox*—and as for womanhood, *maid Marian*, the deputy's '*wife of the ward*'—prostitute—'may be preferred to *thee!* *Go*, you *thing*,'—the term is clearly meant in its sense of *pudenda*, "*go!*"

"Say *what* thing! *What thing?*" demands the furious hostess.

"*What* thing?—why, the thing to *thank God* for!" says the shameless old lecher.

"I am no thing to *thank God* for, I would thou shouldst know!" she replies hotly. "I am an *honest man's wife!* And, setting thy *knighthood* aside, thou art a *knave* to call me so!"

"Setting thy *womanhood* aside, thou art a *beast* to say otherwise!"

"Say *what* beast, thou knave, thou!"

"What beast? Why, an *otter!*"

The prince laughs. "An otter, Sir John! Why an otter?"

"Well, she's neither fish nor flesh!"—like a mermaid. "A man knows not *where* to *have* her!"

"Thou art an unjust man in saying so!" cries she. "Thou or *any* man knows where to have me, thou knave, thou!"

"Thou sayest true, hostess—if he slanders thee most *grossly!*" laughs the prince.

She knows she's being mocked. "So he doth *you*, my lord—and said this other day you owed him a thousand pound!"

Prince Henry frowns at Falstaff. "Sirrah, *do* I owe you a thousand pound?"

"A thousand pound, *hah!*" says the knight haughtily. "A *million!*—thy *love* is worth a million; thou owest me thy love."

"Nay, my lord, he called you a *Jack!*" the hostess reports, "and said he would *cudgel* you!"

Falstaff turns to his companion. "Did I, Bardolph?"

"Indeed, Sir John, you said so."

"Yea—if he said my ring was *copper!*"

The prince steps closer. "I say '*tis copper!* Darest thou be as good as thy word now?"

"Why, Hal, thou knowest, as thou art but *man*, I'd dare! But as thou art *prince*, I *fear* thee as I fear the roaring of a *lion's* whelp."

Prince Henry frowns. "And why not as the *lion?*"

"The *king* is to be feared as the lion! Dost thou think I'll fear thee as I fear thy *father?* Nay, an I do, I pray God my belt would break!"

Prince Henry laughs—harshly. "Oh, if it should, how thy *guts* would fall about thy *knees!*"

"But, sirrah, there's no room for faith, truth, nor honesty in this bosom of *thine*: it is all filled

up with *guts and midriff!*

“Charge an honest woman with *picking thy pocket*? Why, thou whoreson, impudent, heavy-breathing *rascal*, if there were anything in thy pocket but *tavern* reckonings, memorandums of *bawdy-houses*, and one poor penny-worth of *sugar*—candy to make thee *long-winded*—if thy pocket were enriched with any other losses but *those*, I am a *villain!*”

“And yet you will *stand* to it!—*you* will not pocket up wrong!”—admit anything. “Art thou not *ashamed?*”

The knight looks hurt. “Dost thou *hear*, Hal! Thou knowest that *Adam* fell in the times of *innocency*; then what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of *villainy*? Thou seest I have more *flesh* than another man, and therefore more *frailty!*”

The knight faces the prince. “You confess, then, *you* picked my pocket?”

“It appears so by the story.”

“Hostess, I forgive thee!” says Falstaff grandly. “Go, make ready *breakfast*, love thy *husband*, look to thy *servants*, cherish thy *guests!* Thou shalt find me tractable to any honest reckoning! Thou seest I am pacified and still.” He spots her glare and prevents a reply: “Nay, prithee, be gone!”

“Now, Hal, to the news at *court*,” says the knight glibly, as the hostess turns away in disgust. He lowers his voice, more concerned with criminal courts than royal. “As for the robbery, lad, how is that answered?”

“Oh, my sweet beef, I must still be good angel to thee: the money is paid back again.”

Falstaff groans. “Oh, I do not like that *paying back*: ’tis a *doubled* labour!”

The prince informs him, briskly, “I am good *friends* with my *father*, now, and may do anything—”

“Rob me the *exchequer*, the first thing thou doest!—and do it with unwashed hands, too!”—without delay.

Bardolph seconds: “*Do*, my lord!”

But Prince Henry proceeds. “I have procured thee, Jack, a charge of foot”—a commission to conscript and command soldiers.

“I would it had been of *horse!*” groans Falstaff, a fat, aging man, contemplating a future as an infantry officer. He will need to hire a surrogate—one to gather for him the illegal spoils accruing to rank. *Where shall I find one that can steal well? Oh, for a fine thief of the age of two-and-twenty or thereabouts! I am heinously unprovided!*

Well, God be thanked for these rebels! They offend none but the virtuous! I laud them, I praise them!

The prince pulls two papers, folded and sealed, from his regal new coat. “Bardolph.”

“My lord?”

“Go bear this letter to Lord John of Lancaster—to my brother John; this to my lord of Westmoreland.” Bardolph bows, takes them, and hurries out of the tavern.

“Go, Poins, to horse, to *horse!*” urges Prince Henry. “For thou and I have thirty miles to ride yet ere noon!” Poins bows and goes.

“Jack, meet me tomorrow in the Temple Hall at two o’clock in the afternoon. Then shalt thou know thy charge, and there receive orders and money for their furnishing”—to buy clothes and gear for the men Falstaff is to press into military service.

The prince is lost in thought for a moment. “The land is burning. Percy stands on high—and either we or they must lower lie!” He strides away to meet Poins at the front of the dank old building.

Falstaff ponders. *Rare words! Brave world!*

He takes a seat. “Hostess, come, my *breakfast!*”

Laying both hands before him, he sighs. “Oh, I could wish this *table* were my *drum!*”

Chapter Eight

Disappointments Afield

Well *said*, my noble Scot!” Hotspur is trying, in his own rough way, to seem friendly. “If speaking *truth* in this fine age were not thought *flattery*, such attribution should the Douglas have as not one soldier of *this* season’s stamp bears, in the general current through the world!

“By God, *I* cannot flatter!—I do *defy* the tongues of soothers! But a braver place in my heart’s love hath no man than yourself,” he tells Douglas, at the rebels’ shared camp in the west of England, near Shrewsbury and close to the border with Wales. “Nay, task me to my word—*approve* me, my lord!”—put it to trial.

“*Thou* art the king of *honour*,” says the burly Scotsman. “No man so potent breathes upon the ground but I will *beard* him!”—challenge in defense of that.

“*Do* so, and ’tis well! I can but thank you.” A servant well known to Hotspur rides up to the command tent, dismounts and bows. “What hast thou there?”

“These letters come from your father,” the man tells him.

“*Letters* from him! Why comes he not himself?”

“He cannot come, my lord; he is grievous sick.”

“*Zounds!* How has he the leisure to be *sick* in such a rustling time? Who leads his *power*? Under whose government come they along?”

“His letters bear his mind, not I, my lord.”

Hotspur’s uncle, the Earl of Worcester, standing beside him, has heard. “I prithee, tell me, doth he keep his bed?”

“He did, my lord, four days ere I set forth,” the rider reports. “And at the time of my departure thence he was much feared for by his physicians.”

“I would the time of *state* had first been *whole*, ere he by sickness had been visited!” moans Worcester, Northumberland’s brother. “In worth, his health was never better than *now!*”

“*Sick* now? *Droop* now!” says Hotspur. “This ‘sickness’ doth infect the very *life-blood* of our enterprise!—’tis *catching* hither, even in our *camp!*”

He dismisses the serving-man, rips open the sealed missive, and reads. “He writes me here about ‘*inward* sickness’ . . .

“—and that his friends could not so soon be drawn in deputation. . .

“—Nor did he, *removèd*, think it meet to lay so dangerous and costly a trust on any soul but his own!” No deputy is to command Northumberland’s troops; they will stay at home.

Hotspur looks up, angry. “Yet doth he give *us* bold advisement, that with our small conjunction we should *go on*, to see how Fortune is disposed to us!—for, as he writes, there is no quailing now, because the king is certainly possessed of all our purposes!”

He asks the others, “What say you to it?”

“Your father’s sickness is a *maim* to us,” says Worcester gravely.

“A perilous *gash!*—a very *limb* lopped off!” cries Hotspur.

He stares out across the Shropshire hills toward Shrewsbury. “And yet, in faith, it is *not*; his present want *seems* more than we shall find it. . . .

“Were it *good* to set the complete wealth of all our states all on one cast?—to set so rich a main chance on the sheer hazard of *one doubtful hour*?”

“It were *not* good!—for therein should we read the very bottom and seal of *hope*, the very *list*, the very utmost *bounds* of all our fortunes!”

The Scottish patriarch concurs. “Faith, and so we had! While now remains the sweet reversion,”—rich inheritance, “we may *boldly spend* upon the hope of what is to come in! A comfort of *retirement*”—pulling back, if necessary—“lives in this.”

Hotspur nods. “A rendezvous and a home to fly unto, if that the Devil and Mischance frown

upon the maidenhead of our affairs!”

Worcester frets: “But yet I would your father had been here. The *quality of heir* in our attempt brook no *division!* It will be thought by some, who know not why he is away, that wisdom, loyalty, and pure *dislike* of our proceedings kept the earl from hence!

“And think how such an apprehension may turn the tide of fearful factions, and breed a kind of question about our *cause!*”—Mortimer’s tenuous claim to the throne. “For well you know, we of the offering side must keep aloof from *strict arbitrement*, and stop-up all sight-holes—every loop from whence the eye of *Reason* may pry in upon us! This absence of your father’s draws aside a curtain that shows the ignorant a kind of fear before not dreamt of!”

“You strain too far,” argues fearless Hotspur. “I of his absence rather make *this* use: it lends a *lustre* and more-*great* opinion, a larger *daring* to our enterprise, than if the earl were here! For men must think if we *without* his help can make head to push against a kingdom, *with* his help we shall *o’erturn* it, topsy-turvy *down!*”

“Yet all goes well!” he assures the others. “Yet all our joints are whole!”

“As heart can think!” cries the Douglas. “There is not such a word *spoke of* in Scotland as this term ‘fear!’”

They spot a man riding west to join them here, close by the northern reaches of the Severn.

“My cousin *Vernon*,” calls Hotspur as the knight dismounts, “*welcome*, by my soul!”

Sir Richard, gathering the reins of his lathered steed, is grim-faced as he approaches. “Pray God my news be *worth* a welcome, lord: the Earl of Westmoreland, seven thousand strong, is marching hitherwards!—with him, Prince John!”

“No harm; what more?”

“And further, I have learned, the king *himself* in person is set forth!—or hitherwards intended speedily, with strong and mighty preparation!”

Hotspur’s smile is savage. “He shall be welcomed, too! Where is his *son*, the nimble-footed, madcap Prince of Wales—and his comrades that daff the world aside and bid it pass?”

“All *furnishèd*, all in *arms*: all plumed like *estridges* that with the wind *debate!*—like *eagles* having lately bathèd, *glittering* in *golden coats!*—like images as full of spirit as the month of *May*, and splendent as the sun at *midsummer!*—*wanton* as youthful goats, wild as young *bulls!*”

“I saw young Harry—with his visored helmet on, armor on his thighs, gallantly armèd—rise from the ground like feather-footed *Mercury*, and vault with such ease into his seat as if he were an angel dropped down from the clouds, to run in the wind like a fiery *Pegasus*, and ’witch the world with noble horsemanship!”

“No more, no *more!*” protests Hotspur. “Worse than the sun in *March*, this praise doth nourish *agues!*”

“Let them come! In their trim they come like *sacrifices!*—and to Bellona, the fire-eyed maid of smoky *War*, all hot and bleeding will we *offer* them! The mailèd *Mars* shall on his altar sit, *up to the ears in blood!*”

“I am *on fire* to hear that this rich reprisal is so *nigh* but not yet *ours!*”

“*Come!*” he shouts to the southeast, toward London, “let me try my horse, who is to bear me like a *thunderbolt* against the bosom of the Prince of Wales! Harry to *Harry* shall *meet!*—hot, *horse-to-horse!* And ne’er part till one drop down a *corpse!*”

He peers westward. “Oh, that *Glendower* were come!” With the Welsh forces, they could launch an assault now, instead of waiting.

“There is more news,” says Vernon glumly. “I learned in Worcester, as I rode along, that he cannot draw his power here for fourteen days.”

Now even the Douglas is concerned. “That’s the worst tidings that I hear of yet!”

“*Aye*, by my faith, that bears a frosty sound!” says Lord Worcester.

King Henry’s powers are already closing on them; the rebels cannot wait a fortnight for help from the Welsh.

Hotspur asks Vernon, “What may the king’s whole battle force reach unto?”

“To thirty thousand.”

“*Forty* let it be!” cries dauntless Hotspur. “My father and Glendower being both away, the powers of *us* may serve so great a day!

“Come, let us take a muster speedily! Doomsday is near—die *all*, die *merrily!*”

“Talk not of dying,” says the reckless Douglas. “I am out of fear of Death or death’s hand for this *one-half year!*”—the span of their scheming.

The ambitious lords hurry to ready their waiting troops for the coming conflict.

Bardolph, get thee before to Coventry and fill me a bottle with sack!” demands Falstaff, groaning. “Our soldiers shall march through; we’ll to Sutton Co’fil’ tonight.” These two will rest at Sutton Coldfield’s inn while the troops with them continue westward.

From London, the king’s army has already marched more than thirty leagues along the highway toward the plain at Shrewsbury.

“Will you give me money, captain?” The wine will not be free, and Falstaff has been provided with royal funds to conscript and equip his soldiers.

“Lay out, *lay out.*”

“This bottle makes it an *angel*”—a coin named for the figure on it, Bardolph warns, of their accumulating expenditure.

“An if it do, take it for thy labour,” says Falstaff generously, “and if it make *twenty*, take them *all!*” He waves his corporal away. “I’ll answer the coinage.” The knight pulls off his hat and wipes his brow with a handkerchief. “Bid my Lieutenant Peto meet me at town’s end.”

“I will, captain. Farewell.” Bardolph goes on ahead, stopping briefly to speak with Peto beside the long ranks of troops marching toward town.

Falstaff walks wearily along the dirt road, ruminating on his fiscal mischief.

If I be not ashamed of my soldiers, I am a soused gurnet!—a pickled fish. I have misused the king’s impress damnably!

I have got, in exchange for providing a hundred and fifty soldiers, three hundred and odd pounds! I ’pressed me none but good householders, yeomen’s sons—inquired me out contracted bachelors such as had been askèd twice in the banns. He sought out young men whose prosperous families would pay to keep them home, and older ones committed to marrying soon. Such a commodity of warm slaves as had as lief hear the Devil as a drum!—such as fear the report of a caliver—sound of a musket—worse than a hurt wild-duck with a stuck foot!

I ’pressed me none but such toasts-and-butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins’ heads!—and they have bought out their services! They paid him to hire poor men to go in their stead.

And now my whole charge consists of ancients: corporals, lieutenants, ‘gentlemen of companies’—slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth—on tapestry depicting the Bible tale of the beggar—where the glutton’s dogs licked his sores—and others that were never soldiers indeed, but unjustly-discarded serving-men, revolted tapsters, trade-fallen ostlers—and younger sons to younger brothers, the cankers of a calm world and a long peace, ten times more dishonourable and ragged than an old-faced ensign!

And such have I, to fill up the places of them that have bought out their services, that you would think I had a hundred and fifty tattered prodigals lately come from swine-keeping, from eating draff and husks! A mad fellow who met me on the way told me I had unloaded all the gibbets—crossbeams from which the corpses of executed criminals are left to hang, displayed as a warning—and ’pressed the dead bodies!

As they pass, he glances at the decrepit, out-of-step conscripts. *No eye hath seen such scarecrows!—and I’ll not march through Coventry with them, that’s flat! Nay, the villains march wide betwixt the legs, as if they had gyves—shackles—on, for indeed I had the most of them out of prison. There’s but a shirt and a half in all my company! The half-shirt is two towels tacked together and thrown over the shoulders like an herald’s coat, without sleeves!—and the shirt, to*

say the truth, was stolen from mine host at Saint Alban's, or the red-nosed innkeeper of Daventry.

But that's all one, he thinks, comfortably. They'll find linen enough on every hedge!— clothes, washed and laid out to dry, that are easily stolen.

As he trudges along, Prince Henry and Lord Westmoreland come riding toward the rear of the column of troops. "How now, withered Jack!" cries the prince to the seedy old knight. "How now, quilt!" The knight's huge coat, hardly his best, was made from several.

Falstaff peers up, a hand shielding his eyes against the midday sun above the prince. "What, Hal? How now, mad wag! What the devil dost thou in *Warwickshire*?" He squints at the other rider. "My good lord of Westmoreland, I cry you mercy! I thought Your Honour had already been at Shrewsbury...."

"Faith, Sir John, 'tis more than time that I *were* there," says Westmoreland, "and *you*, too! But my powers are there already. The king, I can tell you, looks for *us all*! We must away *all night*!"

"*Tsk*, never fear *me*!" says Falstaff. "I am as vigilant as a cat to steal cream!"

The prince regards the heavy, sweating man. "As I think, to steal cream *indeed*—for thy theft hath already made thee *butter*!" He looks over at the company of slovenly ragmen. "But tell me, Jack, whose fellows are these that come after?"

"Mine, Hal, mine."

"I did never see such *pitiful rascals*!"

"*Tsk, tsk*, good enough to toss," says Falstaff carelessly. "Food for gunpowder, food for powder! They'll fill a pit as well as better." Expecting that he will receive yet more money, to replace those who are killed, he spreads his arms in resignation. "Man: *mortal* men, mortal men...."

Lord Westmoreland frowns, watching the paupers who straggle at the hind end of the marching army. "Aye, but, Sir John, methinks they are *exceedingly* poor and spare—too *beggarly*!"

Falstaff shrugs. "Faith, as for their poverty, I know not where they had that; and for their spareness, I am sure they never learned that from *me*."

"No, I'll be sworn," says Prince Henry, "unless you call *three fingers* on the *ribs*"—as a measure of fat—"spare!"

"But, sirrah, make *haste*! Percy is already in the field!"

"*What*? Is the king encampèd?"

"He *is*, Sir John!" says Westmoreland, spurring his stallion to follow the prince, who has already turned and is riding back toward the leading troops. "I fear we shall be too long!"

Falstaff watches as they ride away, then resumes plodding.

"Well, the latter end of a fray and the *beginning* of a *fest* befit a dull fighter and a hungry guest!"

In the rebels' chilly camp near Shrewsbury this morning, the principal commanders continue their debate, older versus younger. Hotspur is eager, of course: "We'll fight with him *tonight*!"

The Earl of Worcester shakes his head. "It may not be."

The Earl of Douglas protests the veteran's position: "You give *him*, then, the advantage!"

"Not a whit!" counters Sir Richard Vernon.

"Why say you so?" demands Hotspur of his uncle. "Looks he not for supply?"—of more troops.

"So do *we*!" notes Vernon.

"His is *certain*, ours is doubtful!" counters Hotspur; royal forces increase by the hour.

"Good cousin, be *advisèd*," says Worcester. "Stir not tonight!"

"Do not, my lord!" urges Vernon.

The fiery Douglas disagrees: "You do not counsel well! You speak it out of *fear* and cold

heart!”

The knight flushes. “Do me no *slander*, Douglas!” he cries angrily. “By my life—and I dare well *maintain* it with my life, if well-respected honour bid me on!—I hold as little counsel with weak *fear* as you, my lord—or any *Scot* that this day lives!” He scowls. “Let it be seen tomorrow in the *battle* which of us fears!”

“Yea—or *tonight!*” insists the Douglas.

“Content you,” replies the knight.

“*Tonight*, say I!” cries Hotspur.

But Sir Richard pleads again for prudence. “*Come, come* it may not *be!* I wonder much that you, being men of such great leading as you are, foresee not what impediments drag back our expedition! Certain horse”—cavalry—“of my cousin Vernon’s are not yet come up!”

He turns to Lord Percy. “Your uncle Worcester’s horseman came but *today*,”—after a full night’s riding, “and now their pride and mettle are *asleep!*—their courage with hard labour so tamed and dulled that not a horse is half the *half* of itself!”

Hotspur is unswayed. “So are the horses of the *enemy* in general journey ’bated and brought low! The *better* part of ours are full of rest!”

“The *number* of the king’s exceedeth ours!” says Worcester. “For God’s sake, Cousin, stay till *all* come in!”

They hear a trumpet in the opposing forces’ forward camp; it sounds a parley, proposing talk.

An armored knight walks across the green fields and approaches the rebellion’s leaders. He calls ahead, “I come with gracious offers from the *king*, if you vouchsafe me hearing and respect.”

Hotspur strides to meet him. “Welcome, Sir Walter Blunt!—and would to God you were of *our* determination! Some of us love you *well*, though some might deny your great deservings and good name because you are not of our holding, and stand against us like an enemy.”

“And God defend that I, so long in allegiance to *true* rule, should *always* stand so! You stand against *anointed majesty!*” replies Sir Walter—ignoring the irony; King Richard so accused King Henry. “But to my charge.

“The king hath sent to know the nature of your griefs, and whereupon you conjure from the breast of civil peace such bold *hostility*, teaching his duteous land audacious *cruelty!*”

“If that the king have any way forgot your good *deserts*—which he confesseth to be manifold—he bids you *name* your griefs; and with all speed you shall *have* your desires, *with interest*—and *pardon* absolute for yourself and these herein misled by your urging!”

“The king is kind,” says Hotspur dryly. “But we know well this king knows at what time to *promise* and when to *pay!*”

“My father and my uncle and myself did *give* him that same royalty he wears! And when he was not yet *six-and-twenty* strong—was *sick* in the world’s regard, *wretched* and *low*, a poor unminded *outlaw* sneaking home!—my father gave him *welcome* to the shore!

“And when he heard him swear *in vow to God* he came but to be *Duke of Lancaster*—to sue for his livery with tears of *innocency* and terms of *zeal*, and beg his *peace*—my father, in kind heart and pity moved, swore him assistance—and *performed* it, too!

“Now when the lords and barons of the realm perceivèd *Northumberland* did lean toward him, the less and the more came along with cap and knee!—met him in boroughs, cities, villages, attended him on bridges, stood in lanes, laid gifts before him, proffered him their oaths, gave him their heirs as *pages*, followed him even at the heels in *golden multitudes!*”

“As *greatness* knows *itself!*”—the sarcasm is bitter, “he presently stepped a little *higher than his vow*, made to my father while his blood was *poor*, upon the naked shore at Ravenspurgh!

“And *now*, forsooth, takes upon him to *reform* some certain edicts and some strict decrees that lie too heavy on the commonwealth—cries out against *abuses*, seems to *weep* over his country’s wrongs! And by that *face*, the *seeming* brow of justice, did he win the hearts of all that he did angle for—and proceeded further: *cut off the heads* of all the favourites that the absent

king in deputation left behind him here, when he was personally in the Irish war!”

Sir Walter frowns impatiently. “*Tsk*, I came not to hear this.”

“Then to the point,” says Hotspur. “In short time after, he *deposed the king!* Soon after that, *deprived him of his life!* And within a nick of *that*, *taxèd the whole state!*”

“To make that worse, he suffered his kinsman Lord March—who is, if everyone were *properly* placed, indeed his *king!*—to be embattled in Wales, then to lie *forfeited without ransom*; disgracèd *me* in my happy victories; sought to entrap me by spying; berated mine *uncle* from the Council-board; in rage dismissed my *father* from the court!—broke *oath* on *oath*, committed *wrong* on *wrong!*—and, in conclusion, *drove* us to seek out this head, for *safety!*—and withal to pry into his *title!*—the which we find too indirect for long continuance!”

The knight regards Hotspur sourly. “Shall I return *that* answer to the king?”

“Not so, Sir Walter. I’ll *withdraw* a while. Go to the king, let there be impawnèd some surety”—hostage—“for a safe return again; and in the morning, early, shall my *uncle* bring him our purposes. And so farewell.”

The graybeard regards the angry young man. “I would you would *accept* of grace and love.”

“And it may be that so we shall,” says Hotspur.

“Pray God you *do*.” Sir Walter bows and returns to the still-combining armies of King Henry IV.

The Archbishop of York rushes from his palace in that northern city and hands letters to a priest who has been waiting beside a black steed.

“*Hie*, good Sir Michael!—bear this sealèd brief with *wings*’ speed to the lord marshal; this to my cousin Scroop, and all the rest to whom they are directed! If you knew how *much* they do impart, you would make *haste!*”

“My good lord, I guess their tenor!”

“Like enough you *do!* Tomorrow, good Sir Michael, is a day wherein the fortune of *ten thousand men* must bide the touch!”—be assayed. “For, sir, at Shrewsbury, as I am truly given to understand, the king with mighty and quick-raised power confronts Lord Harry!”—Henry Percy, Hotspur.

“*And I fear*, Sir Michael! What with the sickness of Northumberland, whose power was in the first proportion,”—the largest, “and what with Owen Glendower’s absence thence—who with them was rated a sinew, too, but comes not in, o’er-rulèd by *prophecies*—I fear the power of Percy is *too weak* to wage immediate trial with the king!”

“Why, my good lord, you need not fear,” says the younger man. “There is *Douglas*—and Lord *Mortimer!*”

“No, Mortimer is not there.”

“But there *are* Mordake, Vernon, Lord Harry Percy!—and there is my Lord of Worcester. And a force of gallant *warriors*, noble *gentlemen!*”

The archbishop nods. “And so there is. But yet the *king* hath drawn the special heads of all the land together: the Prince of Wales, Lord John of Lancaster, the noble Westmoreland, and warlike Blunt!—and *more*, equally valued men of estimation and command in arms!”

“Doubt not, my lord, they shall be well opposèd!” says Sir Michael.

“I *hope* no less! Yet *needful* ’tis to fear, and to prevent the worst!

“Sir Michael, *speed!* For if Lord Percy thrive not, ere the king dismiss his armies *he means to visit us!*—for he hath heard of our confederacy!

“And ’tis but wisdom to make strong against him! Therefore make haste! I must go write *again*, to *other* friends!

“And so farewell, Sir Michael!” he calls, as the priest rides away, spurring his horse to a gallop.

Chapter Nine The King's Offer

At dawn, King Henry, already clad in glistening, highly polished armor, is waiting with his commanders in their vast encampment; the rebels' emissaries are expected soon. He looks away, in the direction of the distant Thames. "How bloodily the sun begins to peer above yon busky hill! The day looks pale at his distemperature."

"The southern wind doth play the herald to his purposes," says Prince Henry, "and, by the hollow whistling in the leaves, foretells a tempest and a blustering day!"

"Then with the *losers* let it sympathize, for nothing can seem foul to those that win!" says the king.

A trumpet signals the return of Sir Richard Vernon, bringing Hotspur's uncle.

"*How now*, my Lord of Worcester!" cries the king angrily. "'Tis not well that you and I should meet upon such terms as now we greet! You have *deceived* by your trust, and made us doff our easy robes of *peace* to crush our old limbs into ungentle *steel*! This is not *well*, my lord, *this is not well*!"

"What *say* you to it? Will you *unknit* this churlish knot of all-abhorred *war*?—and again move in that obedient orb where you did give a fair and *natural* light, and be no more an exiled *meteor*—a prodigy of *fear*, and a portent of *broached mischief* to the unborn times!"

"Hear me, my liege!" says Worcester. "For mine own part, I could be well content to entertain the lag-end of my life with quiet hours; for I do protest I have not sought the day of this discord."

Henry snorts: "You have not *sought* it! How *comes* it, then?"

- Mutters Falstaff dryly, "Rebellion lay in his way, and he but *found* it." The knight has come here, seeking Hal, in hopes of getting more money.

- The prince hushes him: "*Peace*, magpie, *peace*!"

Worcester faces the king. "It pleased Your Majesty to turn your looks of favour from myself and all our House; and so I must *remember* for you, my lord: *we* were the *first* and *dearest* of your friends! For *you* did I break my staff of office in Richard's time!—and rode day and night to meet you along the way—and kissed your hand, when yet you were in no *place*, and in account nothing so strong and fortunate as I!

"It was myself, my brother, and his son who *brought you home*!"—from exile in Brittany—"and boldly did outdare the *dangers* of the time! You *swore* to us, and you did again swear that oath at Doncaster,"—fifteen leagues inland, in Yorkshire, "that you did nothing purpose 'gainst the *state*, nor claim no further than your newly fallen *right*, the seat of *Gaunt*: dukedom of *Lancaster*! To *that* we swore our aid.

"But in short space it *rained down*, showering *good fortune* on your head! And such a *flood* of greatness fell upon you! What with our help, what with the absent king, what with the injuries of a wanton time, the seeming sufferings that you had borne, and the contrarious winds that held the king so long in his unlucky Irish wars that all in England did repute him *dead*—from this swarm of fine advantages you took occasion to be quickly wooed to grip the general sway into your hand!—and *forget* your oath to us at Doncaster!

"And being *fed* by us, you used us as that ungentle bill of the cuckoo bird useth the sparrow!—did *oppress our nest*; *grew* by our feeding to so great a bulk that even *our* love durst not come near your sight for fear of *swallowing*!

"We were *enforced*, only for *safety's* sake, to fly with nimble wing out of sight, and to raise this present head whereby we stand, composed by such means as *you yourself* have forged against yourself by *unkind usage*, *dangerous countenance*, and *violation* of all faith and troth *sworn* to us in your younger enterprise!"

King Henry scoffs at the rhetoric. "Those things you have articulated—*proclaimed* at market-

crosses, *read aloud in churches*, so as to face the garment of *rebellion* with some fine colour that may please the eye of fickle *changelings* and *poor discontents*, who gape and rub elbows at the news of hurly-burly novelty! And never yet did *insurrection* want for such *watery colours* to impaint its cause—nor for moody *beggars*, starving for a time of pellmell havoc and confusion!”

Now Prince Henry steps forward and addresses his father and the enemy emissary. “In both your armies there is many a soul shall pay full dearly for this encounter, if once they meet *in trial*.”

He turns to Worcester. “Tell your nephew that the Prince of Wales doth join with all the world in *praise* of Henry Percy! Setting aside *my* hopes—and *this present enterprise* lifted from his head—I do not think a *braver* young gentleman—more active, more *valiant*, more daring or more *bold*—is now alive to grace this latter age with noble deeds!

“For my part, I may speak it to my shame that I have a truant been to chivalry—and so, I hear, *he* doth account me, too. Yet this, before my father’s majesty: I am content that he shall take the odds, in his great *name* and *estimation*,”—accept, despite opposing a royal, “and will, to save the blood of either side, try Fortune with him in a *single fight*!”

“And, Prince of Wales, so dare we *venture* thee!” says the king, “albeit considerations infinite”—royalty’s divine anointing—“do make against it!

“*Know*, good Worcester, know *we love our people well*!—we love even those that are *misled* upon your nephew’s part! And if they will take the offer of our grace, both he, and they, and you—*every* man!—shall be my friend again, and I’ll be *his*!

“So *tell* your cousin, and bring me word what he will do.

“But if he will not yield, *rebuke* and *dread correction* lurk about us!—and they shall *do their offices*!

“So be gone; we will not be troubled with reply *now*. We offer fairly; take it advisedly.”

Worcester and Vernon bow stiffly and leave, heading toward the dissidents’ camp.

Prince Henry is glum. “It will not be accepted, on my life; both ‘the Douglas’ and ‘the Hotspur’ are confident, together, against the *world* in arms!”

“Hence, therefore, every leader to his charge!” orders the king. “For upon their answer will we *set on them*! And God befriend us as our cause is just!”

The lords and knights follow King Henry, and begin to deploy their troops in preparation for the imminent fighting. As Prince Henry starts toward his own captains’ tents, Falstaff steps before him.

“Hal, in the battle if thou see me down, then bestride me, so,” urges the fat knight, demonstrating with his legs apart, brandishing his sword and swinging it side-to-side in defiance. “’Tis a point of friendship.”

“Nothing but a *colossus* can do *thee* that friendship!” laughs Prince Henry. “Say thy *prayers*—and ‘*Farewell*!’”

Falstaff sheathes the blade. “I would ’twere bed-time, Hal, and all well.”

“Well, thou owest God a death,” says Prince Henry, striding away.

“’Tis not due *yet*!” mutters Falstaff, watching him go. “I would be loath to pay Him before his day! What need I be so forward with Him that calls not on me?

“Well, ’tis no matter; *Honour* pricks me on!”

Alone, though, he considers. *Yea, but what if Honour prick me off when I come on?—scratches his name from the rolls of the living during combat. What then?*

Can Honour set-to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath any skill in surgery, then? No!

What is honour? A word! What is in that word honour—what is in that ’honour’? Air!—a trim reckoning!

Who hath it? He that died o’ Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. ’Tis insensible, then? Yea—to the dead!

But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not permit it!

*Therefore I'll none of it! Honour is a mere escutcheon!
And so ends my catechism!*

Walking back to the rebels' camp with Vernon, Worcester, worried, has ordered his silence. "Oh, no, Sir Richard, my nephew must not know of the liberal and kind offer of the king."

The knight looks at him, frowning. "'Twere best he *did*."

"Then are *we* all *undone*!" argues the earl, as their horses trail behind. "It is not *possible*, it cannot *be*, that the king would keep his word in loving us! He will *suspect* us ever!—and find in other faults a time to punish *this* offence! All our lives, *Suspicion* shall be stuck full of *eyes*!—for Treason is but trusted like the *fox*, who, ne'er so tame, so cherished and locked up, *will* have the wild trick of his ancestors!

"Look however we can, either sad or merry, *interpretation* will misquote our looks, and we shall feed like oxen in a *stall*—the better nourished, the nearer *death*!

"My *nephew's* trespass may well be forgot; it hath the excuses of *youth* and *heat of blood*, and privilege of an adopted *name*—a hare-brained '*Hotspur*,' governed by a spleen! All his offences live upon *my* head and on his *father's*: we did train him on, and his corruption being ta'en from us, *we*, as the spring of all, shall *pay* for all!

"Therefore, good cousin, let not Harry know, in *any* case, the offer of the king!"

Vernon nods. "Deliver what you will, I'll say 'tis so." He sees Lord Percy and the Douglas hurrying forward to meet them, with their lieutenants following. "Here comes your nephew."

"My uncle is returned!" cries Hotspur. "Deliver up my Lord of Westmoreland," he tells an attendant; the hostage is now to be sent back to the king. "Uncle, what news?"

"The king will bid you to battle *immediately*!"

"*Defy him!* Send word by the Lord of Westmoreland!" urges Hotspur. "Lord Douglas, go you and tell him so!"

"Marry, and *shall*—and very willingly!" says the Scot; he rushes to the hostage.

Says Worcester, sounding sad, "There is no seeming *mercy* in the king."

"Did you *beg* any, God forbid?" demands Hotspur angrily.

"I told him gently of our *grievances*," says the gray-haired earl, "of his *oath*-breaking—which he 'mended' thus: by now *forswearing* that he is *forsworn*! He calls us rebels *traitors*!—and with that hateful name upon us, will *scourge* us with haughty *arms*!"

Douglas returns. "*Arm*, gentlemen!—*to arms*! For I have thrown a brave *defiance* in King Henry's teeth, and Westmoreland, who did bear it, was *enraged*!—which cannot choose but bring him quickly on!"

The deadly clash of armies will occur; Worcester can now report further. "The Prince of Wales stepped forth before the king, and, Nephew, challenged you to single fight."

Hotspur is elated by the offer of his royal rival. "Oh, would that the quarrel lay upon *our* heads, and that no man might draw short breath today but *I and Harry Monmouth*!

"Tell me, *tell me*: how showed his *asking*? Seemed it in contempt?"

"*No*, by my soul!" says Vernon. "I never in my life did hear a challenge urged more modestly, unless a brother should a brother dare to gentle *exercise* in proof of arms! He gave you all the duties of a *man*!—trimmed up your *praises* with a princely tongue, spoke to your deservings like a *chronicle*!—making you *better* than praise by dispraising even *his* praise's value in you!

"And—which became him like a prince indeed!—he made a blushing 'cital of himself; and chid his truant youth with such a *grace* as if he mastered there a *double* spirit: of teaching and of learning at once!

"There did he pause. But let me tell the world: if he outlive the rivalry of these days, England did never own so sweet a hope, so much *misconstrued* in his wantonness!"

"Cousin, I think thou art *enamoured* by his *follies*!" protests Hotspur. "Never did *I* hear of

any prince so wild a *libertine*! But be he as he will, yet once ere night I will *embrace* him—with a *soldier's* arm!—and he shall *shrink* under *my* courtesy!”

He turns to the officers. “*Arm, arm with speed!* And, fellows, soldiers, friends, consider better what you have to do than I, who have not well the gift of tongue, can lift up your blood with persuasion!”

A young messenger comes to Hotspur. “My lord, here are letters for you.”

Hotspur waves him away. “I cannot read them now!

“Oh, gentlemen, the time of life is short! To spend that shortness *basely* were *too long!*—as if life did ride upon a dial’s point, never ending at the arrival of an hour!

“An if we *live*, we live to *tread on kings*; if die, a *brave* death, when *princes* die *with* us! Now, as for our consciences: the arms are fair when the intent of bearing them is just!”

A foot soldier sent from the forward ranks runs to Hotspur and bows, nearly out of breath.

“My lord, *prepare!*—*the king comes on apace!*” he gasps.

“I *thank* him, that he cuts me from my tale,” says Hotspur, “for I profess not *talking!*—only this: let each man do his *best!*”

“And here draw I a sword, whose tempering I intend to stain with the *best blood* that I can meet withal in the adventure of this perilous day!” He swings the heavy steel blade aloft in circles. “Now, *Esperance! Percy!*”

“And *set on!* Sound all the lofty instruments of war, and by that music let us all embrace! For, between heaven and earth, some of us never shall a second time do such a courtesy!”

The trumpets blare out a call to battle, and the bold lords soon move to lead their sometime soldiers into war.

Chapter Ten Shrewsbury

On the broad plain, fighting begins; the armies hurtle forward, soldiers and horsemen meeting in a crush of brutal battle. Spears and steel swords flash, crashing against wooden shields bound with leather and iron, spilling blood from slashed necks and severed limbs, and piercing hearts—of the rebellious or loyal, noble or common, brave or terrified.

A few crave glory, but most merely hope for survival. Many of them, cruelly gashed, gouged and hewn down, will soon be relieved—finished off by knives; but agony, feverish and protracted, will draw others to their final release in the days and weeks to come.

Amid the raging conflict’s cries and carnage, Sir Walter Blunt is confronted by an armored lord. “What is thy name, that in the battle thus thou crossest me? What honour dost thou seek upon my head?”

“Know thou my name is *Douglas!*—and I do haunt thee in the battle thus because some tell me that thou art a *king!*”

“They tell thee true,” replies Sir Walter.

The earl has already faced another of the king’s imposters. “The Lord of Stafford today hath bought thy likeness dearly—for instead of *thee*, King Harry, this sword hath ended *him!* So shall it thee, unless thou yield thee as my prisoner!”

“I was not born a *yielder*, thou prideful Scot!—and thou shalt find a king that will revenge Lord Stafford’s death!”

They both spring forward, engaging in vigorous combat. After three fierce assaults, Douglas kills Blunt: a sudden dagger-thrust beneath the helmet sends blood gushing from his throat, and pouring down, warm, over the victor’s fist and arm.

Hotspur finds his fellow rebel commander. “Oh, Douglas, hadst *thou* fought at Holmedon thus, I never had triumphed upon a Scot!”

“All’s *done*, all’s *won!*” cries Douglas. “Here, breathless, lies the *king!*”

“Where?”

“Here!”

Hotspur kneels to tug open the dead man’s visor. “*This, Douglas? No, I know this face full well! A gallant knight he was; his name was Blunt—semblably furnished like the king himself.*”

Douglas is irked. “*A fool goes thy soul, whither it go!*” he cries, kicking at the corpse. “*A borrowed title hast thou bought too dear! Why didst thou tell me that thou wert a king?*”

Hotspur rises. “*The king hath many marching in his coats.*”

“*Now, by my sword, I will kill all his coats! I’ll murder all his wardrobe, piece by piece, until I meet the king!*”

“*Up, and away!*” calls Hotspur, charging back into the battle. “*Our soldiers stand full fairly for the day!*”

Douglas, too, storms off, looking for more noblemen to kill.

Drums and trumpet alarms sound as the violence rises and ebbs, and foot soldiers—men without armor—surge forward and fall back, their shouts and sudden groans rising past the swirl of bright banners, up from a swarm of troops wearing drab, crimson-spattered cotton.

Sir John Falstaff, alone, his broadsword raised and ready, a pistol tucked in his belt, stalks watchfully among the pairs of gasping men locked in lethal struggles. *Though I could ’scape shot-free—without paying the tab—at London, he thinks wryly, I fear the shot here!—here’s no scoring but upon the pate!*

He stops, spotting the pale, gaping face of a dead man. *Soft! Who are you? Sir Walter Blunt! There’s honour for you!* He snorts. *Here’s nothing futile!*

Carefully he sets down a pistol case and stands still, alert and looking for threats, but Falstaff—a big target—finds the blade a small comfort. He fears the pounding shock felt just before hearing the new weapons. *I am as hot as molten lead, and as heavy too! God keep lead out of me! I need no more weight than mine own bowels!*

He peers around, still feeling very exposed, despite having deserted his company. *I have led my ragamuffins where they are peppered! There’s not three of my hundred and fifty left alive!—and they are destined for the town’s end, to beg during life!* The cripples will be pensionless.

But who comes here?

Prince Henry is hurrying to him, having been disarmed in a fall from his horse after being grazed by an arrow. “*What—stand’st thou idle here?*” he cries. “*Lend me thy sword! Many a nobleman lies stark and stiff under the hoofs of vaunting enemies, whose deaths are yet unrevenged! I prithee, lend me thy sword!*”

Falstaff backs away. “*Oh, Hal, I prithee, give me leave to breathe awhile! Turk nor Gregory—*—infidel nor Catholic—*never did such deeds in arms as I have done this day! I have paid Percy!*” he claims, “*I have made him safe!*” He means dead.

The prince only laughs at *safe*: “*He is, indeed!—and living to kill thee! I prithee, lend me thy sword!*”

“*Nay, before God, Hal, if Percy be alive, thou get’st not my sword! But take my pistol, if thou wilt...*”

“*Give it to me! What, is it in the case?*” He kneels beside the dark wooden box at the knight’s feet.

“*Aye, Hal; ’tis hot, ’tis hot! Here’s that which will sack a city!*”

Just fired, the prince thinks, opening the gun case—but he finds a bottle of wine. “*What?—is it a time to jest and dally now?*” Angrily he hurls the bottle at Falstaff, rises, and dashes away.

“*Well, if Percy be alive, I’ll pierce him!*” cries Falstaff. He recovers the fallen wine. *If he do come in my way,*—happen to pass by, “*so.*”

“*If he do not, and I come in his willingly, let him make a carbonado of me!*—a cut of meat, scored for grilling.

He looks down at the gruesome corpse; flies crawl on its teeth. *I like not such grinning honour as Sir Walter hath! Give me life! Which, if I can save, so!*

If not, honour comes unsought, and there's an end!

Alarums blare from the armies' trumpets, as excursions of troops cross the wide fields, already strewn with hundreds of dead and dying men.

"I prithee, Harry, withdraw thyself!" cries King Henry IV, "thou bleed'st *too much!*" He motions to his younger son. "Lord John of Lancaster, go you with him."

"Not I, my lord, unless I did bleed, too!"

Prince Henry, his left shoulder oozing scarlet from an arrow wound, urges the king to continue consolidating his forces. "I beseech Your Majesty, make *up*, lest your withdrawing do perturb your friends!"

"I will do so! My lord of Westmoreland, help him to his tent!"

The older man grasps the prince's arm. "Come, my lord, I'll lead you to your tent."

"*Lead* me, my lord?" says the prince, pulling away. "I do not need your help! And God forbid a shallow scratch should drive the Prince of Wales from such a field as *this*, where stained nobility lies *trodden* on, and *rebels'* arms triumph in massacres!"

His brother wants to return to the fight as well. "We breathe too long!" cries John. He motions toward two tall men approaching angrily—Scottish knights. "*Come*, cousin Westmoreland, our duty *this* way lies!—for God's sake come!"

Prince Henry grins at the younger prince. "By God, thou hast deceived me, Lancaster! I did not think thee lord of such a spirit! Before, I loved thee as a brother, John; but now, I do respect thee as I do my *soul!*"

John and his uncle rush forward to engage the Scots in combat.

King Henry watches John proudly as his opponent falls. "I saw him hold *Lord Percy* at the point!—with lustier maintenance than I did look for in such an ungrown warrior!"

Prince Henry nods. "Oh, this boy lends mettle to us all!"

His father concurs—regarding both sons.

Douglas rushes forward, sword flashing in the sunlight. "*Another* king! They grow like Hydra's heads!

"I am *The Douglas*—*fatal* to *all* those that wear those colours on them! What art *thou*, that counterfeit'st the person of a king?"

"The king *himself!*" cries King Henry, "who, Douglas, grieves at heart that so many of his *shadows* thou hast met, and not the very king! I have two boys seeking Percy and thyself about the field, but, seeing as thou fall'st on me so luckily, *I* will assay thee!

"So, *defend* thyself!" he cries, plunging forward.

"I fear thou art another counterfeit," says Douglas, warding off a sword thrust, "and yet, in faith, thou bear'st thee *like* a king!" He throws a powerful blow of his blade against the king's. "But *mine* I am sure thou art *not*, whoe'er thou be—and *thus* I'll win thee!" he says, striking again with brutal strength.

Henry falls back, dropping to the ground. Douglas aims his sword downward—but a warning shout nearby stops him.

"*Hold up thy hand*, vile Scot!—or thou art never likely to hold it up *again!*" Prince Harry has come to find his father, and he is running forward. "The spirits of valiant, Stafford, Blunt and Shirley are in *my* arms! It is the *Prince of Wales* that threatens thee—who never *promiseth* but he means to *pay!*" Reaching the other standing warrior, he swings his sword in a broad cross-stroke.

As the king rises to his feet, Douglas, now faced with two skilled adversaries, turns and flees.

The prince raises his steel helmet's visor. "*Cheerly*, my lord! How fares Your Grace?" Panting, he reports that two loyal lords have been calling for help: "Sir Nicholas Gawsey hath for succor sent, and so hath Clifton! I'll to Clifton straight!"

"Stay, and breathe awhile!" cautions the king. "Thou hast *redeemèd* thy lost opinion, and showed thou consider my life of some *value*, in this fair rescue thou hast brought to me!"

Prince Henry flushes. “Oh, God, they did me *too much injury* that ever said I hearkened for your *death!* If it were so, I might have let alone the insulting hand of Douglas over you, which would have been as speedy in bringing your end as all the poisonous potions in the world!” He grins. “And saved the labour of your treacherous son.”

King Henry laughs. “Make your way to Clifton; I’ll to Gawsey!”

The prince’s shoulders sag as he heads away, jaws clenched. He frowns and touches his wound; he winces, painfully aware of the injury.

When his eyes open he sees Hotspur.

“If I mistake not, thou art Harry *Monmouth!*”

The prince regards him. “Thou speak’st as if I would *deny* my name.”

“*My name is Harry Percy!*”

“Why, then I see a very valiant *rebel* of that name! I am the Prince of Wales—and think not, Percy, to *share* with me in glory any longer!” He raises his sword to fighting position. “Two stars keep not their motion in *one sphere*, nor can one England brook a *double* reign of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales!”

“Nor *shall* it, Harry!” sneers Hotspur, moving forward, “for the hour is come to end the one of us!—and would to God thy name in *arms* were now as great as mine!”

“I’ll make it *greater* ere I part from thee!—and all the budding honours on thy crest I’ll *crop* to make a garland for *my* head!”

Hotspur, enraged, attacks. “I can no longer brook thy vanities!”

They fight furiously, each sword battering a shield, then clanging against the other blade, steel to steel—again and again slicing the air near a fast-dodging foe.

As they circle warily and leap forward, striving for domination, Falstaff ambles up nearby. “Well *said*, Hal!” he cries, as a blow to the helmet momentarily dazes Hotspur, and leaves his cheek bleeding. “*To it* Hal! Nay, you shall find no boys’ play *here*, I can tell you!”

But as the knight watches the heated contest, Douglas approaches from behind; glaring. He raises his blade and drives it at Falstaff, piercing the billowing cloak and heavy coat. With a loud groan the huge man drops to the ground; his sword lies beside him, as his pale hand slowly unclasps the hilt.

And now Hotspur cries out, gravely wounded. As he falls to the turf, Prince Henry turns to face Douglas—who hastily leaves the young Lancastrian lord.

Hotspur slowly sits up, lifts his visor, and stares with disbelief at the blood pouring from his side. “Oh, Harry, thou hast *robbed* me!—of my youth; I better brook the loss of brittle life than those proud *titles* thou hast won from me!—they wound my *thoughts* worse than sword my *flesh!*”

“But thought’s the slave of *life*—and life’s time’s *fool.*” He coughs harshly, and spits up blood. “And time, that takes survey of all the world, must have a *stop.*”

“Oh, I could *prophesy*, but that the earthy and cold hand of death lies on my tongue.” He sinks back, gasping. “No, Percy, thou art *dust*, and food... for...” His sightless eyes glaze, opened onto the sky.

“For *worms*, brave Percy,” mutters Prince Henry. He removes his own helmet and wipes sweat from his forehead.

“Fare thee well, great heart! Ill-weavèd *ambition*, how much art thou shrunk! When that this body did contain a spirit, a *kingdom* was too small a bound for it! But now two paces of the vilest earth is room enough.

“This earth that bears thee dead bears not alive so *stout* a gentleman.” He kneels beside the body. “If thou wert sensible of courtesy, I should not make so dear a show of zeal. But let my favours hide thy mangled face.” From his own helmet he unties a small wreath of blue and white, silks of his colors in heraldry twisted together. He closes Hotspur’s eyes and places it over them.

“And, even in thy behalf, I’ll thank *myself* for doing these fair rites of tenderness. Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven. May thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave, and not be remembered in thy epitaph.”

He rises, and goes to look at the supine mound of Falstaff. “*What, old acquaintance?—could not all this flesh keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!*”

“I could have *better* spared a better *man*. Oh, I should have a *heavy* miss of thee, if I were much in love with *vanity*”—lowly pursuits. “Death hath not struck as *fat* a deer today, though many dearer”—worth more—“in this bloody fray!”

“Embowelled will I see thee”—readied for burial—“by and by; till then in blood by noble Percy lie.”

Ignoring the growing pain in his shoulder, the prince strides away, and soon he has returned to the fighting.

—
After a moment, Sir John opens an eye; he peers around cautiously, then sits up.

Embowelled! If thou embowel me today I'll give you leave to pepper me and eat me, too, tomorrow!

'Sblood, 'twas time to counterfeit ere that hot, termagant Scot had paid me, scot and lot!

Counterfeit? I lie—I am no counterfeit! To die is to be a counterfeit: for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man! But to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed!

The better part of valour is discretion—by which better part I have saved my life.

He struggles to his feet, picks up his sword, and moves warily toward the corpse. *'Zounds, I am afraid of this gunpowder Percy, though he be dead! What if he should counterfeit, too, and rise? By my faith, I am afraid he would prove the better counterfeit! Therefore I'll make him sure.* He has a further idea: *Yea, and I'll swear I killed him!*

Why may not he rise as well as I? he asks himself. He looks around. *Nothing confutes me but eyes, and nobody sees me. Therefore, sirrah,* he says, stabbing the body with his sword, *with a new wound in your thigh, come you along with me.*

He kneels and grunts, straining to lift the body and hoist it onto his shoulders, then picks up his own now-bloodied sword.

As he staggers in the direction of the king's camp, Prince Harry returns with another lord of Lancaster. “Come, brother John; full bravely hast thou fleshèd thy maiden sword!” says the prince as they walk.

John stops and points to Falstaff. “But, soft!—whom have we here? Did you not tell me this fat man was dead?”

“I did!—I *saw* him dead, breathless and bleeding on the ground!”

“Art thou alive?” he asks the knight. “Or is it fantasy that plays upon our eyesight? I prithee, *speak!*—we will not trust our eyes without our ears! *Thou* art not what thou *seem'st!*”

Falstaff groans, straightening under his burden. “No, that's certain: I am not a *double* man! But if I be not Jack Falstaff, then am I a *jack*.” He ducks his head and shoulders to shift the corpse forward and drop it unceremoniously onto the ground. “There is *Percy!*”

“If your father will do me any honour, so; if *not*, let him kill the next Percy *himself!* I look to be either *earl* or *duke*, I can assure you!”

Prince Henry stares. “Why, *Percy* I killed *myself!*—and saw *thee dead!*”

Falstaff frowns. “*Didst* thou?” He shakes his head and looks sadly at John. “Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying!”

“I grant you I was *down*, and out of breath—and so was *he!* But we rose, both at an instant, and *fought*, a long *hour* by Shrewsbury clock!” The distant chimes can be heard here. “If I may be believed, so; if not, let them that *should* reward valour bear the sin upon their own heads! I'll take it upon my death that I gave him this wound in the thigh! If the man were alive and would *deny* it, *'zounds*, I would make him eat a piece of my sword!”

Lancaster is amazed. “This is the strangest tale that ever I heard!”

“This is the strangest *fellow*, brother John!” the prince tells him.

“Come, bring your noble luggage on your back,” he tells Falstaff wearily. “For my part, if a

lie may do thee grace, I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have."

They hear a distant horn's solemn call. "The trumpet sounds retreat; the day is ours," says the prince. "Come, Brother, let us to the highest of the field, to see what friends are living, who are dead."

He and his brother stride away.

Falstaff again goes to his knees, again manages to lift the dead man.

As they say, I'll follow, for reward. He that rewards me, God reward him!

If I do grow great, I'll grow less! he vows, sweating, for I'll purge, and leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do!

—
Outside his tent, King Henry regards the bound prisoners with angry contempt. "Thus ever did *rebellion* find *rebuke!*" He intends no irony.

And he has learned what Hotspur was told. "Ill-spirited *Worcester!* Did not we send *grace, pardon, and terms of love* to all of you? And wouldst thou turn our offers *contrary!*—*misuse* the tenor of thy kinsman's trust?

"*Three knights* upon our party slain today, a noble *earl*, and many a creature else had been *alive* this hour, if like a Christian thou hadst *truly* borne betwixt our armies true *intelligence!*"

"What I have done my safety urged me to," says Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester. "And I embrace this fortune patiently, since, not to be avoided, it falls on me."

"Bear Worcester to *the death!*—and Vernon, too!" the king orders his men. "Other offenders we will pause upon.

"How goes the field?" he asks, as the deceitful emissaries are led away to execution.

Prince Harry replies. "The noble Scot, Lord Douglas—when he saw the fortune of the day quite turned from him, with the noble Percy slain and all his men upon the foot of fear!—*fled with the rest!*—and, falling from a hill, he was so bruised that the pursuers *took him!* At my tent the Douglas is; and I beseech Your Grace that *I* may dispose of him."

"With all my heart!" says the grateful king.

The prince smiles. "Then, brother John of Lancaster, to you this honourable bounty shall belong: go to the Douglas, and deliver him up to his pleasure—ransomless and free!

"His *valour*, shown upon our crests today, hath taught us how to respect such high deeds, even in the bosom of our adversaries." And, as Douglas will hardly forget his allies' perfidy; Scots will be less of a threat.

John bows. "I thank Your Grace for this high courtesy, which I shall give away immediately."

King Henry is somber. "Then this remains: that we divide our forces.

"You, son John, and my cousin Westmoreland towards York shall bend you with your dearest speed, to meet Northumberland and the prelate Scroop, who, as we hear, are busily in arms.

"Myself and you, son Harry, will towards Wales, to fight with Glendower and the Earl of March.

"Rebellion in this land shall lose its sway, meeting the check of *another* such day!

"And since this business so fair is done, let us not leave off till all our *own* be *won!*"