

# **King Henry IV, Part 2**

**by William Shakespeare**

Presented by Paul W. Collins

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## Chapter One Wanting Word

From out of the blue-black sky looming over northern England just before dawn, a sourly strident voice makes itself known. “*Open your ears!*—for who will stop the vents of hearing when loud *Rumour* speaks?”

“*I*, from the Orient to the drooping West, making the *wind* my post-horse, ever unfold the acts commenced on this ball of earth! Upon my many tongues *continual slanders* ride—the which in every language I pronounce, stuffing the ears of men with *false reports!*”

“*I* speak of peace—while covert *enmity*, under the smile of safety, *wounds the world!*”

“And, the year swol’n big with some *other* griefs, who but *Rumour*, who but only *I*, beguile it to make fearful musters and prepare defences as though with child by the stern tyrant *War*—and no such matter!

“*Rumour* is a *flute* blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures—one of so easy and so plain a stop that the blunt monster with uncounted heads, the ever-discordant, wavering *multitude*, can play upon it!

“But what need *I* thus my well-known body to anatomize to *my household?*”

“Why is *Rumour* here? *I* run ahead of King Henry’s victory—who in a bloody field by Shrewsbury hath beaten down young Hotspur and those troops, quenching the flame of bold rebellion even with the rebels’ *blood!*”

The mischievous spirit now seems taken aback: “But what mean *I* to speak so *true* at first? *My* office is to noise abroad that Harry Monmouth”—the prince—“*fell*, under the wrath of noble Hotspur’s sword!—and that the king before the Douglas’s rage *stooped his anointed head* as low as *death!* This have *I* rumoured through all the peasant towns between that regal field at Shrewsbury and this worm-eaten hold of ragged stone, where Hotspur’s father, old Northumberland, lies *crafty-sick.*”

Just before the battle, the shrewd old earl had sent his fellow rebels word that he was ailing, and that he trusted no surrogate to lead his forces. Without his troops, and others delayed by their allied Welsh patriarch, Glendower, the challengers to Lancastrian rule were greatly outnumbered.

Laughs the allegory, hovering over dark Warkworth Castle, “The posts come untiring on, but not a man of them brings other news than they have learned from *me!*”

“From *Rumour*’s tongues they bring smooth comforts—*false*, worse than true *wrongs....*”

In the chill shadow between lengthening shafts of a clear sunrise, a nobleman rides up to the castle entrance, dismounts, and hurries his steaming, lathered stallion forward. He calls into the courtyard, “Who keeps the gate here? *Ho!*” An old man with a lantern opens the door. “Where is the earl?”

“What shall *I* say you are?” asks the porter, peering in the still-dim light.

“Tell thou the earl that Lord Bancroft doth attend him here!”

“His lordship is walkèd forth into the orchard; please it Your Honour, knock at the gate, and he himself will answer.”

Even as he speaks, Northumberland hobbles toward him, using a crutch, but eager for information. “Here comes the earl,” says the visitor. The ancient bows, unlocks the iron gates, and shuffles away, leading the wet horse to the stable.

“What *news*, Lord Bancroft?” demands Northumberland. “Every *minute* now should be the father of some stratagem!—the times are wild! *Contention*, like a horse full of high feeling, madly hath broken loose, and bears down all before it!”

“Noble earl, *I* bring you certain news from Shrewsbury!”

“*Good*, an God will!”

“As good as heart can *wish!* The king is wounded almost to the *death*; and in the fortune of

my lord your *son*,”—Henry Percy, known as Hotspur, “Prince Harry is *slain outright!*—and both of the Blunts killed by the hand of Douglas! Young Prince John and Westmoreland and Stafford *fled the field!*” He adds a dry note: “And Harry Monmouth’s brawn, the hulk Sir John, is *prisoner* to your son!

“*Oh, such a day—so fought, so fairly won, and so followed!*—came not till *now* to dignify the times since *Caesar’s* fortunes!”

But Northumberland must doubt the account; the king and his two sons marched with forces much greater than young Lord Percy and his Scottish ally, Lord Douglas, had mustered. “How is this derived? *Saw* you the field? Came you from Shrewsbury?”

“I spake with one, my lord, that came from thence, a gentleman well bred and of good name, who freely rendered me these news for true.”

Northumberland, his graying head wrapped in a scarf as if he had been bedridden, looks past him toward the road. “Here comes my servant Travers, whom I sent on Tuesday last to listen after news.”

“My lord, I over-rode him on the way,” says Bancroft, “and he is furnished with no certainties more than he haply may retell from *me*.”

The earl hurries to the servant as he dismounts. “Now, Travers, what good tidings come with you?”

Gathering his reins, the man bows. “My lord, Sir John Umfrevile, being better horsed, out-rode me, and turned me back with *joyful* tidings.

“After him came, spurring hard, a gentleman almost forspent with speed, who stopped by me to breathe his bloodied horse. He asked the way to Chester, and of him I did demand what news from Shrewsbury. He told me that rebellion had *bad luck*, and that young Harry Percy’s spur was cold!

“With that, he gave his able horse the head, and bending forward, struck his armèd heels, up to the rowel-head, against the panting sides of his poor jade!—and so starting, he seemed in running to *devour* the way, staying no longer question!”

Northumberland ponders. “*Hmh*. Again—said he young Harry Percy’s spur was cold?—of Hotspur *Coldspur?*—that the rebellion had met ill luck?”

Lord Bancroft intervenes, annoyed. “My lord, I’ll tell you *what*: if my young lord your son have not the day, upon mine honour, for a silken *string* I’ll give my *barony!* Never talk of it!”

The earl stares at the road. “Why should that gentleman who rode by Travers give, then, such instances of loss?”

“Who, *he?*—he was some hilding *fellow* that had *stolen* the horse he rode on, and, upon my life, spoke at a venture!”—hazarded a guess. He spots another rider. “Look, here comes more news!”

The earl watches the horseman. “Yea, this man’s brow, like to a book’s title-leaf, foretells the nature of a *tragic* volume; so looks the strand”—furrowed beach—“whereon the imperious flood hath left usurpation unwitnessed.” He hails the newcomer: “*Say*, Morton: didst thou come from Shrewsbury?”

“I *ran* from Shrewsbury, my noble lord!—where hateful *Death* put on his ugliest mask to fright our party!”

“How doth my son and brother?” Fighting beside Hotspur was his uncle, Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester—a primary instigator of the rebellion. “Thou *tremblest!*—and the whiteness in thy *cheek* is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand!

“Even such a man—so faint, so spiritless, so dull, so dead in look, so *woe*-begone—drew *Priam’s* bed-curtain in the dead of night, and would have told him half his Troy was *burnt!* But Priam found the *fire* ere he his *tongue!*—as I my Percys’ death ere thou report’st it.

“*This* thou wouldst say: ‘Your son did thus and thus; your brother thus; so fought the noble Douglas’—stopping up my greedy ear with *their* bold deeds! But in the end, to *stop* my ear *indeed*, thou hast a *sigh* to blow away that praise—ending with, ‘Brother, son, and all are dead.’”

“*Douglas* is living,” Morton tells him, of the Scottish patriarch, “and your *brother*, yet. But as for my lord your son—”

Northumberland interrupts: “Why, *he is dead!* See what a ready tongue *suspicion* hath: he that but fears the thing he would not know hath, by instinct, knowledge from others’ eyes that what he fears is chanced!

“Yet speak, Morton. Tell thou an earl his divination *lies*, and I will take it as a *sweet* disgrace, and make thee *rich* for doing me such wrong!”

Says Morton sadly, “You are too great to be by me gainsaid. Your spirit is too true, your fears too certain.”

The old man pleads: “Yet for all this, say not that Percy’s *dead!*” His narrow shoulders sag. “I see a strange confession in thine eye; thou shakest thy head and hold’st, as if in fear of *sin*, to speak a *truth*.”

“If he be slain, *say* so! The tongue offends not that reports his death; and he doth sin that doth *believe* the dead, not he that says the dead is not alive.

“Yet the first bringer of unwelcome news hath but a losing office,” he admits, “and his tongue sounds ever after as a *sullen* bell, remembered tolling a departing friend....”

Lord Bancroft moves forward. “I cannot think, my lord, your son is dead!”

Says Morton, “I am sorry I should force you to believe that which I would to God I had not *seen!* But these mine eyes saw him in bloody state, rendering *faint* quittance, *wearied* and out-breathed, to Harry Monmouth—whose swift wrath beat down the never-daunted Percy to the earth, from whence with life he never more sprung up.

“In few: *his* death—he whose spirit lent a *fire* even to the dullest peasant in his camp!—once being bruited,”—noised about, “took fire and heat away from the best-tempered courage in his *troops!* For from *his* metal was his party *steelèd*—which once in him abated, all the rest turned, within themselves, like dull and heavy *lead!* And as the thing that’s dense in itself flies, upon enforcement, with greatest speed, so did our men, heavy-hearted in Hotspur’s loss, lend to this weight such *lightness* with their *feet* that arrows fled not swifter toward their aim than did our soldiers, aiming at their own safety, *fly from the field!*”

“Then was the noble *Worcester*, too, soon ta’en prisoner; and that furious Scot, the bloody *Douglas*, whose well-labouring sword had three times slain the *appearance* of the king,”—killed noblemen disguised as Henry IV—“vailèd his stomach,”—lost courage, “and did grace the shame of those that turned their backs!—and in his flight, stumbling in fear, was taken!

“The sum of all is that *the king hath won!*—and hath sent out a speedy power to encounter *you*, my lord, under the conduct of young Lancaster”—Prince John—“and Westmoreland!

“This is the news at full.”

Northumberland stares at the ground, briefly, in grim silence. “For this I shall have time enough for mourning.

“But in *poison* there is *physic*—these news, having been well brought, have *made* me sick; and being sick has in some measure made me *well.*” He looks angrily to the south. “As the wretch whose fever-weakened joints buckle under life like strengthless hinges, impatient in his fit breaks out of his keeper’s arms as *if afire*, even so my limbs, weakened with grief, being now *enraged* with grief, are *thrice* themselves!

“*Hence*, therefore, thou simple crutch!” he cries, casting it away. “A scaly gauntlet with joints of *steel* must now glove this hand!” He pulls off the scarf. “And *hence*, thou sickly quoil!—thou art a guard too wanton for the head which *princes*, flush with *conquest*, aim to hit!

“Now I’ll bind my brows with *iron*—and approach the ragged’st hour that time and spite dare bring to frown upon the *engagèd Northumberland!*”

“Let *heaven* kiss *earth!*”—fall. “Now let not *Nature*’s hand keep the wild *flood* confinèd! *Let order die!*” he shouts to the sky. “And let this *world* no longer be a stage to feed contention in a *lingering* act; but let *one spirit*—of the first-born *Cain*—reign in *all* bosoms!” he cries, “so that, each heart being set on *bloody* courses, the rude scene may *end!*—and *darkness* be the burier of

the dead!”

Says Travers, alarmed by his rising fury and calls for apocalypse, “This *strained* passion doth you *wrong*, my lord!”

“Sweet earl, divorce not *wisdom* from Your Honour!” warns Lord Bancroft.

Morton regards Northumberland without sympathy. “The lives of all your loving ’complices lean on your *health*—the which, if you give o’er to stormy passion, must perforce decay!

“*You cast the event*”—wagered his fortune—“on war, my noble lord—and summed the account of chance before you said ‘Let us make head’”—calculated before rallying others. “It was your pre-surmise that in the dole of blows your son might drop; you *knew* he walked o’er perils *on an edge*, more likely to fall in than to get o’er! You were advised his flesh was capable of wounds and scars, and that his forward spirit would lift him where most trade of *danger* ranged!

“Yet *none* of that, though strongly understood, could restrain thy stiff-borne action, and you did say ‘*Go forth!*’

“What hath then befallen, or what hath this bold enterprise brought forth, more than that which was *likely* to be?”

Bancroft concurs. “We *all* that are engaged in this knew that we ventured on such dangerous seas that, if we wrought not, ’twas, *ten-to-one*, loss of our *life!* And yet we ventured, for the *gain* proposèd choked the respect of *peril* feared!

“But since we are o’erset, *venture again!* Come!—we will put forth *all*: body and goods!”

Morton agrees. “’Tis more than time! And, my most noble lord, I hear *for certain*, and do speak the truth: the gentle *Archbishop of York*”—a rebel ally—“is up, with well-appointed powers!

“He is a man who with a *double* surety binds his followers! My lord your son had only *corpses*—only the *shadows* and the *shows* of men!—to fight beside him; for that word ‘*rebellion*’ did divide the action of their bodies from their *souls*, and they did fight with queasiness, constrained like men taking potions. So, their weapons only *seemèd* on our side; and as for their *spirits* and *souls*, this same word *rebellion* had *frozen them up* as fish are in a pond!

“But now the *bishop* turns insurrection into *religion!* Supposèd *sincere* and *holy* in his thoughts, he’s being followed with body *and* with mind!—and doth *enlarge* his rising with the blood of fair *King Richard*, scrapèd from Pomfret stones!—derives from *heaven* his quarrel and his cause!—tells them he doth bestride a *bleeding land*, gasping for *life* under ‘great *Bolingbroke!*’ And both more and less”—rich and poor—“do flock to follow him!”

Lord Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV, had returned from banishment, forced Richard II from the throne, and imprisoned him in Pomfret Castle—where Richard was murdered.

Northumberland nods. “I knew of this before. But, to speak truth, this present *grief* had wiped it from my mind.”

He turns toward the castle. “Come in with me—and counsel, every man, the aptest way for safety in *revenge!*”

“Get posts and letters, and make friends with *speed!*”

“Never so *few*, and never yet more *need!*”

## Chapter Two Falstaff

**O**n a narrow street in London, Sir John Falstaff walks ahead of his page. The fat knight asks the small boy trotting along behind, “Sirrah, you *giant*, what says the doctor of my water?”—a sample of his urine.

“He said, sir, the water itself was a good, healthy water,”—a sizeable specimen, “but as for the party that owned it, he might have *more diseases* than *he* knew of!”

The aging knight stops, annoyed. “Men of *all sorts* take a pride to *gibe* at me! The brain of this foolish, compounded clay, Man, is not able to invent anything that provokes *laughter* more than *I* invent—or is invented *on me*! I am not only witty myself, but the *cause* of wit in other men!”

Shaking his head, he glances down at the little lad. “I do here walk before thee like a *sow* that hath overwhelmed all her litter but *one*! If the prince put thee into my service for any other reason than to *set me off*, why then I have no judgment!”

Before the war Prince Harry, because of his father’s dubious assumption of the throne, had chosen to consort with several of Eastcheap’s disreputable denizens rather than take a regal role at the palace; now, he just wants to keep an eye on them.

Falstaff looks at the young rascal’s smiling face, rosy cheeks. “Thou whoreson mandrake, thou art fitter to be *worn in my cap* than to walk at my heels! I was never ‘manned’ with an *agate*”—a ring’s carved stone—“till now; but I will inset you in neither gold nor silver, but in *vile apparel*, and send you back again as a jewel for your *master*—the *juvenile* prince, your master whose chin is *not yet fledged*!”

“I will sooner have a beard grow in the *palm of my hand* than *he* shall get one on his cheek, and yet he will not stick at saying his face is a *royal* face! God *may* finish it, when He will; ’tis not a *hair* amiss *yet*. He may keep it ever as a face *royal*,”—a play on the term for a coin, “for a *barber* shall never earn sixpence out of it!” says the old knight. “And yet he’ll be crowing as if he had writ ‘man’ ever since his father was a *bachelor*!”

“He may keep his *own* grace,”—and the honor of being addressed as *Your Grace*, “but he’s almost out of *mine*, I can assure him!”

Falstaff sighs and resumes his late-afternoon stroll. “What said Master Dombledon about the satin for my short cloak and my slops?” The tailor is to stitch together a stylish new cape and the loose-fitting breeches—hardly military attire. And the huge knight’s order will require a considerable quantity of fabric.

“He said, sir, you should procure him better assurance than *Bardolph*,” Sir John’s red-haired drinking companion. “He would not take *his* bond”—promise to pay—“*and yours*! He liked not the security.”

“Let him be *damned* like the *glutton*!”—hardly a Biblical epithet Falstaff should use. He fumes, indignant: “Pray God his tongue be *hotter* than whoreson *Achitophel*’s!”—that of the counselor condemned for abandoning Israel’s King David. “A rascally, ‘*yea, forsooth!*’ knave, to bear a gentleman in hand,”—lead a customer on, “and then stand upon *security*!”

“The whoreson smooth-pates”—bald shop keepers—“do now wear nothing but *high shoes*, and bunches of *keys* at their waists”—instead of weapons. “And if a man is to be *through* with them in honest taking-up, then he must stand upon *security*! I had as lief they would put *ratsbane* in my mouth as offer to *stop* it up with security!”

“I looked he should have sent me two-and-twenty yards of *satin*, as I am a true knight—and he sends me ‘security!’ Well, may he *sleep* in security—for he hath the horn in *abundance*; and the *lightness* of his wife”—her promiscuous nature—“shines through it!” Horns are the emblem of a cuckold; thin sheets of horn are used in place of glass. “And yet he cannot *see*, though he have his own *lanthorn* to light him!”

He glances down the street. “Where’s Bardolph?” he asks impatiently.

“He’s gone into Smithfield to buy Your Worship a horse.” The flat, open-market area is known for the poor quality of its animals.

“I bought *him* in *Paul’s*,”—the nave of St. Paul’s Cathedral, where workmen offer their services, “and he’ll buy me a horse in *Smithfield*? If I could but get me a wife in the *stews*,”—whorehouses, “I were manned, horsed, *and* wived!” grumbles Falstaff.

The boy sees two men approaching. “Sir, here comes the nobleman that committed the prince to jail for striking him over Bardolph.” The incident occurred when Sir William Gascoigne, the renowned lord chief justice, ordered Bardolph to jail for drunkenness. The high officer and his

deputy are now nearing the knight.

“*Walk close,*” Falstaff tells the page, “I will not see him.” Both stare down as they pass, apparently deep in discussion.

The judge stops. “What’s he that goes there?”

“Falstaff, an’t please Your Lordship.”

“He that was in question for the *robbery?*” Just before the war began, Falstaff and several degenerate associates waylaid some travelers, including a royal agent carrying money to the king’s treasury, at Gad’s Hill on the road between London and Canterbury, and robbed them of gold. Despite his mask, the big, unruly knight was easily identified.

“*He,* my lord,” says the servant. “But he hath since done good service at Shrewsbury—and, as I hear, is now going with some charge under Lord John of Lancaster.” Falstaff has received a new infantry commission as a captain under Prince Harry’s young brother, whose forces will soon confront the remaining rebels.

The chief justice seems surprised. “What, to *York?*”—where the king’s enemies are gathering. “Call him back again.”

“Sir John Falstaff!”

The knight continues walking away. “Boy, tell him I am deaf!” he whispers.

“You must speak louder!” calls the page. “My master is *deaf.*”

“I am sure he *is*—to the hearing of anything *good,*” mutters the judge. “Go, pluck him by the elbow; I must speak with him.”

The servant, pushing past the page, does so. “Sir John!”

Falstaff is instantly indignant. “*What?*—a young *knave*—and *begging!* Is there not *wars?* Is there not *employment?*—doth not the king lack *subjects?*—do not the rebels need *soldiers?* Though it be a shame to be on any side but *one,* it is *worse* shame to *beg* than to be *on the other side!*—more than even the name of *rebellion* can tell *how* to make it worse!”

“You mistake me, sir—”

“*Why,* sir?—did I say you were an *honest* man? Setting my *knighthood* and my *soldiership* aside, I had *lied in my throat* if I had said *so!*”

The chief justice’s clerk replies angrily, “Then I pray you, sir, *set* your knighthood and your soldiership aside, and give me leave to tell you: *you lie in your throat* if you say I am any *other* than an honest man!”

“I give thee leave to tell me so?” scowls Falstaff. “*I,* lay aside that which *grows* to me?”—he means distinctions other than fat. He glares. “If thou gettest any leave of *me,* hang me! If thou *takest* leave, thou wert better *be hanged!*”

“*You hunt counter!*”—beg in vain, he cries with scorn. “Hence! *Avaunt!*”

“Sir, *my lord* would speak—”

“Sir John Falstaff, a word with you.” The chief justice himself approaches.

Falstaff turns, then bows, smiling warmly. “My good lord! God give Your Lordship good time of day! I am glad to see Your Lordship *abroad!* I heard say Your Lordship was *sick.* I hope Your Lordship goes abroad by advice”—of a physician. “Your Lordship, though not clean *past* your youth, hath yet some smack of *age* in you, some relish of the saltiness of time!—and I must humbly beseech Your Lordship to have a reverent care of your health.”

“Sir John, I sent for you before your expedition to Shrewsbury—”

“An’t please Your Lordship,” Falstaff interrupts, “I hear his majesty is returned with some *discomfort* from Wales....”

“I talk not of his majesty. You would not come when I *sent* for you—”

“And I hear, moreover, his highness is fallen into this same whoreson *apoplexy!*”

“Well, God mend him. I pray you, let me speak with you—”

But Falstaff is frowning thoughtfully. “This apoplexy is, as I take it, a kind of *lethargy,* an’t please Your Lordship—a kind of *sleeping* in the blood, a whoreson *tingling.*”

“Why tell you me of *it?* Be it as it is—”



“It hath its original from much *grief*,” Falstaff persists, “from study, and perturbation of the brain. I have read the cause of his effects in Galen: it is a kind of *deafness*.”

“I think *you* are fallen into the disease, for you *hear* not what I *say* to you!”

Falstaff disagrees. “Very *well*, my lord, *very well*; it is rather the disease, an’t please you, of *not listening*—the malady of not *marking*—that *I* am troubled withal.”

Says the nobleman angrily, “To punish you by the *heels*”—a dishonored knight might be suspended upside down—“would amend the attention of your *ears*! And I care not if I *do* become your *physician*!”

Says Falstaff, adopting his metaphor, “I am as *poor* as Job, my lord, but not so *patient*! Now, Your Lordship may minister a potion of imprisonment to me in respect to poverty; but should I be your patient and follow your *prescriptions*? The wise may make some dram of a scruple,”—two tiny apothecary weights; *scruple* can also mean *qualm*, “or indeed a scruple *itself*!”

The justice is further annoyed by the quibbles. “I *sent* for you, when there were matters against you for your *life*,”—capital charges, “to come speak with me!”

Falstaff refers to his former military commission, from Prince Harry: “As I was then advised, by my learned counsel in the laws of this land’s *service*, I did not come.”

“Well, the truth is, Sir John, you live in great infamy!”

Oversized over all, Falstaff nods. “He that buckles him in *my* belt cannot live in *less*.”

“Your means are very slender, but your waste is great!”

“I would it were *otherwise*: I would my *means* were greater and my waist *slenderer*.”

The lord chief justice glares. “You have misled the youthful *prince*!” Many believe that Harry, who had spent time with Falstaff’s thievish friends, but is now a hero of the war’s opening battles, had been corrupted by the knight. But the sober young student of common citizens’ ways had quietly made restitution for his erstwhile companions’ crimes.

“The young prince hath misled *me*!” counters Falstaff. “I *am* a fellow with a great belly, but is *he* my *dog*?”—follower.

“Well, I am loath to gall a new-healed wound,” says Sir William. “Your day’s service at Shrewsbury hath a little gilded over your *night’s* exploit on Gad’s Hill; you may thank the unquiet time for your quiet o’er-posting that action”—getting past it so readily.

Falstaff begins to protest. “My lord—”

“But since all is *well*, *keep* it so!—wake not a sleeping wolf!” warns the old judge—adapting the *sleeping-dog* maxim to accommodate his own dignity.

Falstaff nods—but mutters, “To ‘wake a *wolf*’ is as bad as to ‘smell a *fox*’”—a sly scavenger.

“*What*?” The judge shakes his head. “*You* are as a candle: the *better* part *burnt out*!”

“A *wassail* candle, my lord: all *tallow*,” says Falstaff modestly. “But if I did say of *wax*,”—which is more costly, “my growth would approve the *truth*!” He is hardly waning.

The stern justice frowns, disapproving of the levity. “There is not a white hair on your face but *should* have its effect in *gravity*!”

The knight wipes the matted beard. “It’s affected by *gravy*,” he explains, “*gravy*.”

“You follow the young prince up and down like his ill angel!”—personal demon.

Falstaff objects: “Not *so*, my lord! Your *ill* ‘angel’ is *light*,”—because some precious metal has been removed, illegally, from the coin, “but I hope He that looks upon *me* will take me without *weighing*!”

He glances toward heaven. “And yet, in *some* respects, I grant, I *might* go in; I cannot tell. *Virtue* is held in so little regard in these costermonger times that *true valour* is turned *bear-herd*; *perception* is made a *tapster*, and hath its quick wit wasted in giving reckonings!”—adding up bar tabs. “All the other gifts appertinent to Man, as the malice of *this* age shapes them, are not worth a gooseberry!

“You that are *old* consider not the capacities of us that are *young*; you do measure the heat of our livers”—exuberant behavior—“with the bitterness of your galls!” He shrugs. “And we that are in the vanguard of our youth, I must confess, are *wags*, too!”

The chief justice—who is younger than Falstaff—stands amazed. “Do you set down *your* name in the scroll of *youth*?—you who are *written down* old with *all the characters* of age! Have you not a moist eye? A dry hand? A yellow cheek? A white beard? A decreasing leg? An increasing belly? Is not your voice broken—your wind short, your chin double?—your *wit single*?—and every part about you blasted with *antiquity*? And will you yet call yourself *young*? *Fie, fie, fie*, Sir John!”

“My lord, I was *born* about three of the clock in the afternoon”—when he awoke today—“with a white head and something of a round belly. As for my voice, I have lost it with *halloing*, and singing of *anthems*! To approve my youth, I will say no further. The truth is, I am only old in *judgment* and *understanding*!”

“And he that will not *caper* with me for a *thousand marks*”—join in a rich prank, “let him *lend* me the money!—and *have at him*!” He is irked that Harry returned the stolen gold, with interest. “As for the box on the ear that the prince gave you: he gave it like a *rude* prince—and you took it like a *sensible* lord!”

The judge, he can see, does not enjoy the jest on *sensing*—and is likely remembering the indignity he suffered in the incident. “I have chided him for it, and the young lion repents,” says Falstaff. “Marry, not in ashes and sackcloth,” he adds dryly, “but in new silk and old sack”—fine clothes and good-vintage wine.

“Well, God send the prince a *better companion*!”

“God send the companion a better *prince*! I cannot rid my hands of him!” complains Falstaff.

Sir William knows otherwise. “Well, the *king* hath severed you and Prince Harry. I hear you are going with Lord John of Lancaster against the archbishop and the Earl of Northumberland.” The Archbishop of York has rallied forces to side with the old nobleman in the rebellion.

Falstaff resents the judge’s influence with King Henry—which, he suspects, has led to the knight’s being kept, much against his will, in military service. “Yea; I thank *your* pretty, sweet wit for it!

“But look that you pray, all you who kiss my lady Peace at *home*, that our armies join not on a *hot* day!—for, by the Lord, I take but *two shirts* out with me, and I mean not to sweat extraordinarily. If it be a hot day and I brandish anything but a *bottle*, I would I might never spit white again!

“There is not a *dangerous* action can peep out its head but I am thrust upon it!” grumbles the knight. “Well, I cannot last forever. But it was always yet the trick of our English nation, if they have a good thing, to make it *too common*!”—overwork it. “If ye will needs say I am an *old* man, you should *give me rest*!”

“I would to God my name were not so *terrible* to the *enemy* as it is,” he moans. “I were better to be eaten to death with *rust* than to be *scoured to nothing* with perpetual motion!”

The chief justice wants to be on his way. “Well, be honest, be *honest*. And God bless your expedition!” He wants the fighting among Englishmen to end.

“Will Your Lordship lend me a thousand pound to furnish me forth?”

“Not a penny, not a *penny*; you are too impudent to bear *crosses*!” says the justice, enjoying his own jest on coins’ marking. “Fare you well! Commend me to my cousin Westmoreland,” an earl, one of the king’s key supporters. The judge and his clerk continue walking toward the Court of the King’s Bench.

Thinks Falstaff, *If I do, fillip me with a three-man beetle!*—a large mallet. He frowns; he does need money. *A man can no more separate age and covetousness than he can part young limbs and lechery! But the gout galls the one, and the pox pinches the other—so both decrees foretold my curses!* “Boy!”

“Sir?”

“What money is in my purse?”

“Seven groats and two-pence.”

Falstaff is exasperated. “I can get no *remedy* for this wasting away of the purse! Borrowing

only *lingers* and *lingers* it out, but the disease is incurable!”

He pulls sealed papers from inside his doublet. “Go, bear this letter to my lord of Lancaster; this to the prince; this to the Earl of Westmoreland—and this to old Mistress Ursula, whom I have weekly sworn to marry since I perceived the *first* white hair on my chin.” Each letter asks for a “loan.”

“*About it!* You know where to find me.” He is a regular patron of an unsavory tavern in London’s tawdry Eastcheap section; the woman functions there as a madam.

The page takes the letters and trots away.

*A pox on this gout! Or a gout on this pox!* thinks the knight, now favoring his left foot as he walks, *for the one or the other plays the rogue with my great toe! ’Tis no matter if I do limp; I have the wars for my colour,*—his explanation: a battle wound—*and my pension shall seem the more reasonable.*

*A good wit will make use of anything!—I will turn diseases into commodities!*

### Chapter Three Anticipation and Concern

SEventy-five miles north of London, at York, the archbishop concludes his comments to several lords, all seated around a massive, carved-oak table, whom he has summoned to meet in his palace. “Thus have you heard our cause and known our means; and, my most noble friends, I pray you all, speak plainly your opinions of our hopes.

“And first, lord marshal, what say *you* to it?” he asks Thomas Mowbray.

“I well allow the *occasion* of our arms,”—an expected attack, the earl replies, dryly, “but gladly would be better satisfied how, given our means, we should advance ourselves to look with forehead *bold* and *big* enough upon the power and puissance of the *king*.”

One nobleman tells him, “Our *present* musters grow upon the file to *five and twenty thousand* men of choice, but our supplies live largely in the hope of great *Northumberland*, whose bosom burns with an incensèd fire of injuries.”

Lord Bancroft regards him. “The question then, Lord Hastings, standeth thus: whether our present five and twenty thousand may hold up head *without* Northumberland.”

“With him, we may—” begins Hastings.

“Yea, marry, there’s the *point!*” says Bancroft. “But if *without* him we be thought too feeble, *my* judgment is that we should not step too far till we have his assistance *by the hand!* For in a theme so bloody-faced as this, conjecture, expectation, and surmise of aids *incertain* should not be admitted!”

“’Tis very true, Lord Bancroft,” says the archbishop, “for indeed that was young *Hotspur’s* case at Shrewsbury.”

“It *was*, my lord,” says Bancroft. “He aligned himself with *hope*, eating *air* on the *promise* of supply—*flattering* himself in projecting a power”—attacking with forces—“much smaller than the smallest in his *thought!* And so, with the great imagination proper to *madmen*, he led his powers to *death*, and, eyes shut, leaped into *destruction!*”

Still, Hastings wants to proceed. “But, by your leave, it never yet did hurt to lay down *likelihoods*, and forms of *hope*.”

Bancroft is a skeptic. “Yet the quality of the *present* war—indeed, this instant action, the cause *afoot*—lives in such hope as when in an early *spring* we see the appearing buds—which to prove *fruit*, hope gives not as much warrant as *despair* that frosts will bite them!

“When we mean to *build*, we first survey the plot, then draw a model; and when we see the figure of the house, we must then rate the cost of the erection—which if we find outweighs *ability*, what do we then but draw the model anew, for fewer purposes?—or at last desist building at all!

“Much more in *this* great work, which is almost to pluck a *kingdom* down and set another up, should we survey the plot of situation, and the model!—question surveyors, consent upon a *sure foundation*, know how *able* is our own estate to undergo such a work, weighed against its opposition!

“Or else we fortify *paper* and *designs*, using the *names* of men instead of men, like one that draws a model beyond his power to build it—who halfway through gives o’er, and leaves his partly created house *naked*—subject to the weeping clouds, and waiting for churlish *winter*’s tyranny!”

Hastings replies: “Even granted that our hopes, *yet* likely of fair birth, could be still-born, and that we are already possessed of the utmost men in expectation, I think we are a body *strong enough as we are* to equal with the king!”

The doubter scoffs. “*What*, has the *king* but five and twenty thousand?”

“Against *us* no more!—nay, not so *much*, Lord Bancroft,” argues Hastings. “For, as the times do brawl, his divisions are in several heads: one power against the *French* and one against *Glendower!*—perforce a *third* must take up *us!* So is the unfirm king in three *divided*—and his *coffers* sound of hollow poverty and emptiness!”

The archbishop believes the other threats to King Henry will continue. “That he should draw his strengths together and come against *us* in full puissance need not be dreaded.”

Adds Hastings, “If he should do so, he leaves his *back unarmed!*—the French and Welsh baying him at the heels! Never fear *that!*”

Bancroft considers for a moment. “Who is it likely should lead his forces hither?”

“The Duke of Lancaster”—Prince John—“and Westmoreland,” says Hastings. “Against the Welsh, himself and Harry Monmouth”—Prince Harry. “But who is substituted ’gainst the French, I have no certain notice.”

“Let us *on*, and publish the explanation for our arms!” urges the archbishop. “The commonwealth is *sick* of their own choice: their over-greedy love hath *surfeited!* An habitation *giddy and unsure* hath he that buildeth on the *vulgar* heart!”—the commoner’s. “O thou foolish *many*, with what loud *applause* didst thou beat heaven with blessing Bolingbroke, before he was what thou wouldst have him be!”—king. “And being now trimmèd with thine own desires, thou, beastly *feeder*, art so *full* of him that thou *provokest* thyself to *cast him up!*”—to spew.

“So, *so*, thou common *dog*,” adds the churchman, “didst thou disgorge thy glutton bosom of the royal *Richard!* And *now*, when thou wouldst *eat* thy dead vomit, thou howl’st to *find* it!

“What *trust* is in *these* times? Thou that when *Richard* lived would have him *die* are now become enamoured of his *grave!*”

“Thou that threw’st *dust* upon his goodly head when through proud London he came sighing on after the admirèd heels of Bolingbroke, criest now, ‘O earth, yield us that *king* again, and *take* thou *this!*’

“Oh, thoughts of men accursèd! *Past* and *to come* seems best—things present, *worst!*”

Mowbray looks at the others. “Shall we go draw our numbers”—gather troops—“and set on?”

Hastings rises, nodding. “We are *Time*’s subjects—and *Time* bids *begone!*”

The nobleman means *get moving*—but Rumor might well laugh.

**M**istress Ursula Quickly is primed for confrontation late this morning. “Master Fang, have you entered the action?” she asks the officer.

“It is entered.” Her charges have been filed with the magistrate.

“Where’s your yeoman? Is’t a lusty yeoman?—will he *stand to ’t?*”

Fang asks his boy, “Sirrah, where’s Snare?”

“Oh, Lord, *aye!*” says Mistress Quickly, approving. “Good Master *Snare!*”

A large, burly man with a black beard clumps past the others on the muddy road through Eastcheap. “Here,” he says, wiping his hands on the threadbare blue jacket of his office, “here.”

“Snare, we must arrest Sir John Falstaff,” Fang tells him.

“Yes, good Master Snare!” says Mistress Quickly. “I have *entered* him and *all!*”

“It may ’chance cost some of us our lives,” warns Snare, “for he will *stab*—”

“*Alas* the day!” she cries. “Take *heed* of him!—he’s stabbed *me* in *mine own house!*—and that most *bestly!* If his *weapon* be out, he will foine like any devil!” She shakes her head. “In good faith, he cares not *what* mischief he does! He will spare neither man, woman, nor child!”

Snare rubs his large, hairy-backed hands together. “If I can close with him, I care not for his thrust!”

“No, nor *I* neither!” says Mistress Quickly. “I’ll be at your elbows!”

Snare in confident. “An I but *fist* him once, an ’a come but within my *vice*—”

“I am *undone* by his going!” moans Mistress Quickly, worried that the knight, bound for the war, will leave his debts at home unpaid. “I warrant you, he’s an infinitive thing upon *my* score!”—an endless debit, although *thing* suggests *penis*. “Good Master Fang, hold him *sure*; good Master Snare, let him not ’*scape!*”

“He comes continually to Pie Corner,”—she ignores the smirks; it’s on Cock’s Lane, “saving your manhoods, to ‘buy a saddle!’ And he’s indicted to dinner at the Lubber’s Head in Lumbert Street, is Master Smooth, the *silk* man!

“I pray ye, since my action is entered and my case so openly known to the world,”—ill-phrased; *case* is a common synonym for *cunt*, “let him be brought in to his *answer!* A hundred marks”—sixty-six pounds—“is a *long one* for a poor, lone woman to bear!” She groans, thinking of what the fat knight owes her. “And I have so borne, and borne, and *borne*, and have been fubbed off, and *fubbed* off, and fubbed *off*, from *this* day to *that* day, that it is a *shame* to be *thought* on! There is no honesty in such dealing; unless a woman should be made an *ass* and a *beast*, to bear every knave’s wrongs!”

She points up the street. “Yonder he *comes!*—and that arrant, malmsey-nose knave Bardolph with him! Do your offices, do your *offices!* Master Fang and Master Snare, *do me, do me, do me* your *offices!*”

Falstaff approaches, aware of turmoil. “How now?—whose mare’s dead? What’s the matter?”

Fang reaches for his arm. “Sir John, I arrest you at the suit of Mistress Quickly!”

“*Away*, varlets!” cries Falstaff, stepping back. “*Draw*, Bardolph! Cut me off the villain’s *head!* Throw the *quean*”—a rude term for a woman—“in the channel!” The Thames is a quarter-mile away.

“Throw me in the *channel?*” huffs Mistress Quickly. “I’ll throw *thee* in the channel!” She shakes a small white fist. “Murder, *murder!*” she cries, as Bardolph brandishes his rapier. “Wilt thou? *Wilt* thou, thou *bastardly rogue!* *Oh*, thou *honey-suckle*”—she means homicidal—“*villain!* Wilt thou kill God’s officers—and the *king’s?* *Ah*, thou *rogue*, thou art a *honey-seed!*—a *man-queller*, and a *woman-queller!*”

As the *killer* back away, Falstaff urges, from beside him, “Keep them *off*, Bardolph!”

Fang calls for help as his prisoner escapes, protesting, “A rescue! A *rescue!*”

“Good *people* bring a rescuer *too!*” cries Mistress Quickly, as passers-by dash for safety. She glares at the knight. “Thou *wo’t*, *wo’t* thou? *Thou wo’t*, *wo’t* ya? *Do, do*, thou rogue! *Do*, thou *hemp-speed!*”—one destined for a hangman’s rope.

“*Away*, you *scullion!*” cries Falstaff. “You *rampallion!* You *fustilarian!* I’ll tickle your *cat-ass-trophee!*”

The disturbance soon draws the lord chief justice—with four deputies. “What is the *matter?*” he demands. “Keep the *peace* here, *ho!*”

Mistress Quickly hurries to his side. “Good my lord, be good to me! I beseech you, *stand to me!*”

He ignores the unintentionally indecent request. “How now, Sir John! *What?*—are you *brawling* here? Doth *this* become your place, your time and business? You should have been well

on your way to *York!*”—with a new company of foot-soldiers.

“Stand *from* him, fellow! Wherefore hang’st upon him?” demands the judge. Bardolph moves away a pace and sheathes his blade.

Mistress Quickly curtsies. “O most worshipful lord, an’t please Your Grace, I am a poor widow of Eastcheap, and he is *arrested at my suit.*”

“For what sum?”

“It is more than for *some*, my lord!—it is for *all*, all I *have!* He hath eaten me out of house and home!—he hath put all my substance into that fat belly of his!

“But I will have some of it *out* again!” she tells Falstaff hotly, “or I will ride thee o’ nights like the mare!”—nightmare.

“I think I am as likely to *ride the mare!*” retorts Falstaff, “if I have any vantage of grounds to *get up!*”

The chief justice is dismayed by the knight’s ribald reply. “How comes *this*, Sir John? *Fie!* What man of good temper would deliver this tempest of exclamation? Are you not *ashamed* to enforce a poor widow to so rough a course to *come by her own?*”

Falstaff faces the widow. “What is the gross sum that I owe thee?”

“Marry, if thou wert an *honest* man,” she says ruefully, “*thyself*, and the money too!

“Thou didst swear to me—upon a partly gilt goblet, sitting in my ‘Dolphin’ chamber, at the round table by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the prince broke thy head for likening his father to a *singing-man* of Windsor—thou didst *swear* to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to *marry* me and make me *my lady thy wife!*

“Canst thou *deny* it? Did not Goodwife Suet, the butcher’s wife, come in then and call me *Gossip Quickly?*—coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar; telling us she had a good dish of prawns?—whereby thou didst desire to eat some?—whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And didst thou not, when she was gone down stairs, desire me to be no more so familiarly with such *poor* people?—saying that ere long they should call me *madam!*”—so addressing a knight’s wife, as she took it, if not as he meant it.

“And didst thou not *kiss* me, and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy *Book oath!*—*deny* it, if thou *canst!*”

Falstaff turns calmly to the justice. “My lord, this is a poor, mad soul—and she says up and down the town that her eldest son *looks like you!*” The judge merely frowns. “She hath not *seen* a good case; and the truth is, poverty hath distracted her,” the knight adds benevolently. “But as for these foolish *officers*, I beseech you I may have *redress* against them!”

The justice scolds: “Sir John, Sir *John*, I am well acquainted with your manner of wrenching a true cause a false way! It is not the confident *brow*, nor the *throng of words* that come with such *more-than-impudent sauciness* from you that can thrust *me* from a level consideration!

“You have, as it appears to me, *practised* upon the easy, yielding spirit of this woman, and made her serve your uses, both in purse and in person!”

“Yes, in truth, my lord!” she affirms, utterly unabashed.

“Pray thee, *peace,*” the judge tells her. He eyes Falstaff with contempt. “Pay her the debt you owe her, and *unpay* the *villainy* you have done her! The one you may do with sterling *money*, and the other with current *repentance!*”

Falstaff affects indignation. “My lord, I will not undergo this stripe”—whip mark—“without *reply!* You call honourable *boldness* ‘impudent *sauciness!*’ If a man will make *courtesy*”—bow—“and say *nothing*, is he *virtuous?* No, my lord!—my humble duty remembered, I will not be your *petitioner*; I say to you I do *deserve* deliverance from these officers, being upon hasty employment in the *king’s* affairs!”

As the deputies gaze, frowning, at Falstaff, the justice rebukes him: “You *speak* as one having *power* to do wrong! But answer to the effect on your *reputation*, and *satisfy* this poor woman!”

Falstaff knows he is *ill* reputed—and surrounded; still, *satisfy*.... “Come hither, hostess.”

They confer together quietly.

As the two talk, the chief justice spots a man running toward him, waving a document to draw his attention. “Now, Master Gower, what news?”

“The *king*, my lord, and Harry, *Prince of Wales*, are near at hand!” gasps Gower. “The rest the paper tells....”

The judge unfolds it and begins to read.

Falstaff is gently taking Mistress Quickly by the hand. “As I am a gentleman,” he tells her in conclusion.

“Faith, you *said* so *before!*” she replies.

“As I am a *gentleman*. Come, no more words on it.”

She is fretful. “By this heavenly ground I tread on, I would be forced to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining-chambers!”—muslin, painted with scenes of allegory. But she does not withdraw her hand.

“Glasses, *glasses* is the only drinking ware!” he counters glibly. “And as for thy walls: a pretty, slight drollery in watercolor—on the story of the prodigal, or the hunting German—is worth a *thousand* of these *bed-hangings*, these *fly-bitten* ‘tapestries!’”

Falstaff smiles. “Let it be ten pounds, if thou canst” he says, of this new loan of money. “Come, an ’twere not for thy *humours*,”—moods, “there’s not a better wench in England!” She blushes, and he notes her tears. “Go, wash thy face, and withdraw the action. Come, thou must not be in this humour with *me!*—dost not *know* me? Come, come, I know thou wast *set on* to do this....”

“Pray thee, Sir John, let it be but *twenty nobles*,”—about three pounds, she pleads. “I’ faith, I *am* loath to pawn my *plate*, so God save me, *la!*”

“Let it alone,” says Falstaff gently. “I’ll make other shift,” he sighs—while thinking, *You’ll be a fool ever!*

Mistress Quickly surrenders. “Well, you shall *have* it, though I pawn my gown!” She looks up at him, wiping her eyes. “I hope you’ll come to supper. You’ll pay me all *together?*”—everything, someday.

Falstaff beams. “Will I *live?*” To Bardolph he whispers. “Go!—*with* her, *with* her!” he urges, eager to get the money. “Hook on, *hook on!*”

Mistress Quickly strives to please: “Will you have Doll Tearsheet meet you at supper?”

Falstaff smiles at her again. “No more words,” he says tenderly. But as she goes he adds, “Let’s have her.”

Bardolph leads the hostess away, and the deputies return to their rounds.

The lord chief justice now looks up from the paper. “I have heard *better* news,” he tells Gower gravely.

“What’s the news, my lord?” asks Falstaff.

The judge ignores him. “Where lay the king last night?”

“At Basingstoke, my lord,” Gower reports.

“I hope, my lord, all’s well,” says Falstaff, trying again. “What is the news, my lord?”

“Come all his forces back?” asks Sir William.

“No,” says Gower. “Fifteen hundred foot, five hundred horse, are marching with my lord of Lancaster against Northumberland and the archbishop.” Having defeated Glendower’s force, those royal troops are camped about fifteen leagues west of London, preparing to march north to confront the remaining rebels.

Falstaff persists. “Comes the king back from Wales, my noble lord?”

“You shall have letters of me presently,” the judge tells his chief clerk. “Come, go along with me, good Master Gower.” They start away.

“My lord!—” says Falstaff.

“What’s the *matter?*” asks the chief justice, annoyed.

The knight smiles. “Master *Gower*, shall I entreat you to dine with me?” It is nearly noon.

“I must wait upon my good lord, here; I thank you, good Sir John.”

The judge frowns. “Sir John, you loiter here *too long*, being you are to take soldiers up”—impress men into service—“in counties as you go.”

Falstaff looks past him. “Will you *sup* with me, Master Gower?”

The justice frowns. “What foolish master taught you these manners, Sir John?”

“Master Gower,” says Falstaff, “if they *become* me not, he was a *fool* that taught them to me!” He looks at the chief justice. “This is the rite of *fencing* grace, my lord: *tap for tap!*—and so I part fair!” With that, he lumbers away.

Says the disgusted judge, watching, “Now may the Lord *’lighten* thee!—thou art a *great fool!*”

## Chapter Four War Again Threatens

**B**efore God, I am exceeding *weary!*” groans Prince Harry. He has finished the long march leading troops back from Shrewsbury, and now trudges along in the heat of London.

“Is’t come to that?” asks Poins in mock dismay. “I had thought weariness durst not have attached”—arrested—“one of so high blood!”

“Faith, it does *me*—though it discolours the complexion of my greatness to *acknowledge* it! Doth it not show vilely in me to desire small beer?”—mild home brew, the most common beverage for all, including children.

The gentleman, too, is thirsty, but he craves more-potent potions. “Why, a prince should not be so loosely studied”—so poor a student—“as to remember so weak a *composition!*” he says with facetious scorn.

“Belike then my appetite was not *princely* begot,” laughs Harry, “for, by my troth, I *do* now remember the poor creature small beer!” He regards his companion, and wryly affects annoyance: “Indeed, these humble considerations take me out of love with my *greatness!* But what a disgrace is it to me to remember *thy* name, or to know *thy* face tomorrow! Or to take note how many pair of silk stockings thou hast—namely *these*, and those that were thy peach-coloured ones; or to bear the inventory of thy shirts—as, one for superfluity and another for *use!*”

“But *that* the *tennis-court* keeper knows better than I; for it is a low ebb of linen with thee when thou keepest not a racket there—as thou hast not done for a great while, because the rest of thy low countries have made a shift to eat up thy Holland!” His children’s clothes have been cut from his fine, Holland-cloth shirts. “And God knows whether those that bawl out in the ruins of thy linen shall inherit *his* kingdom!” Poins laughs, always happy to think of the rascals.

“The midwives say only the *children* are not in the *fault!*”—involved in the crime—“whereupon the world *increases*, and *kindreds* are mightily strengthened!” adds the prince, hands clasped behind his back as they walk.

His companion is amused, but well aware of what being *kindred* to the *king* means. “How ill it follows, after you have laboured so hard, you should talk so *idly!* Tell me, how many good young princes would do so, their fathers being so sick as yours at this time is?”

But Harry now supports his father—and recently, in battle, saved his life. He stops. “Shall I tell thee one thing, Poins?”

“Yes, *’faith*—but let it be an excellent *good* thing!”

“It shall serve—among wits of no higher breeding than *thine!*” gibes Harry.

“Go to!” says Poins, stopping, hands on hips. “I’ll withstand the push of your *’one thing!* that you will tell!”

“Marry, I tell thee it is not *meet* that I should be solemn,”—not appropriate to show concern, “now that my father is sick. But I can tell *thee*, as to one it pleases me, for lack of a *better*, to call my friend: I *could* be sad—and sad in *deed*, too.”



“Very *hardly* upon such a *subject!*”—*topic* and *person ruled* laughs Poins, after the prince’s dig.

But Harry is peeved that even Poins has thought his alienation would continue in wartime. “By this hand, thou thinkest me as far in the devil’s book as *thou and Falstaff* for obduracy and persistency!

“Let the *end* try the man,” he says, and resumes walking. “But I’ll tell thee my heart bleeds inwardly that my father is so sick!

“And keeping such vile company as *thou* art hath *for a reason* taken from me all ostentation of sorrow.”

“The reason?”

“What wouldst thou think of me if I should weep?”

“I would think thee a most princely *hypocrite.*”

Prince Harry nods. “It would be *every* man’s thought! And thou art a blessed fellow to think as *every* man thinks!” he tells his friend dryly. “Never a man’s thought in the world keeps to the road-way”—the ordinary path—“better than thine!

“Every man *would* think me an hypocrite indeed. And what stirs your most worshipful thought to think so?”

Poins shrugs. “Why, because you have been so wicked, and so much engrafted to Falstaff.”

“And to *thee.*”

“By this light, *I* am *well* spoke on!” protests Poins. “I can hear it with my own *ears!* The worst that they can say of me is that I am a second brother”—unlikely to inherit, “and that I am a proper fellow with my fists—and those two things I confess I cannot help!”

He points ahead on the street. “By the Mass, here comes Bardolph!”

“And the boy that I gave Falstaff.” Prince Harry frowns, observing, as they approach, the page’s fancy new apparel and cocky swagger. “He had him from me *Christian*—and look if the fat villain have not transformed him *ape!*”

Reaching them, Bardolph bows. “God save Your Grace!”

Prince Harry nods. “And *yours*, most noble Bardolph!”

Poins teases the red-haired, scarlet-complexioned soldier: “Come, you virtuous ass, you bashful fool, *must* you be *blushing?* Wherefore blush you *now?* What a *maidenly* man-at-arms are you become! Is’t such a matter to get a *pottle-pot’s* maidenhead?”—an achievement to divest a beer mug of its foam.

The page laughs. “He called me e’en now, my lord, through a red lattice,”—of a typical tavern casement, “and I could discern no part of *his face* from the *window!* At last I spied his *eyes*—and methought he had made two holes in the ale-wife’s new *petticoat*, and so peepèd through!”

Prince Harry shakes his head. He asks Poins, with irony, “Has not the boy *profited?*”

Bardolph swats ineffectually at the small lad with his hat. “*Away*, you whoreson *upright rabbit, away!*”

“*Away*, you rascally *Althaea’s dream*, away!” cries the page, dodging.

“Instruct us, boy!—*what* dream, boy?” demands Prince Harry; the classical allusion likely stems from Falstaff’s tainting tutelage.

“Marry, my lord, Althaea dreamed she was delivered of”—gave birth to—“a *fire-brand*; and therefore I call him her dream!”

The prince is amused by the conflation of queens: Hecuba, warned at her son’s birth that the fiery-warrior-to-be would bring destruction to Troy; and Althaea, advised by the Fates that her Greek child’s life depended upon the preservation of a fire-brand—a hearth log.

“A *crown’s* worth of good interpretation!” he laughs, pulling a coin from a leather purse. “There ’tis, boy.”

“Oh, that this good blossom could be kept from cankers!”—caterpillars, chuckles Poins. “Well, there is sixpence to preserve thee,” he says, adding to the gratuity.

Bardolph scowls at their largess. “If between you you do not make him *hanged*, the gallows shall have been *wronged!*”—cheated.

“And how doth thy master, Bardolph?” asks Prince Harry.

“*Well*, my lord.” He reaches inside his coat, remembering. “He heard of Your Grace’s coming to town; there’s a letter for you.”

“Delivered with good respect,”—due alacrity, say Poins sourly, as the prince unfolds the missive. “And how doth that martlemas”—autumn feast—“your master?”

“In bodily health, sir.”

“Marry, the *immortal* part needs the physician! But *that* moves not him: though that be sick, it *dines* not,” says Poins.

The prince is annoyed by the letter’s content. “I do *allow* this wen”—lump—“to be as familiar with me as my *dog*—and he *holds* its place, for look you how he writes!” He hands the paper to Poins.

The gentleman reads aloud: “‘John Falstaff, *knight*—’ *Every* man must know *that*, as oft as he has occasion to name *himself!*” notes Ned. “Even like those that are kin to the king; for they never prick their finger but they say, ‘There’s some of the *king’s* blood spilt!’

“‘How comes that?’ asks he that takes upon him not to understand.

“The answer is as ready as a borrower’s *cap*: ‘I am the king’s poor *cousin*, sir.’”

Harry laughs. “Aye, they *will* be kin to us, or they will fetch it from *Japhet!*”—Noah’s third son, Biblical ancestor of all Europeans. “But to the letter...”

The gentleman reads further: “‘From Sir John Falstaff, knight, to the son of the king nearest his father, *Harry*, Prince of Wales, greeting!’” Poins looks up, irritated. “Why, this is *by certificate!*”—a familiarity that, without such written authorization, is impertinence, if not insolence; Henry should have been named properly—and first.

“Peace,” says the prince; there’s more.

Poins reads on: “‘I will imitate the honourable Roman in brevity.’ He surely means brevity in *breath*: short-winded! ‘I *commend* me to thee, I commend *thee*, and I *leave* thee’”—a lame allusion to Julius Caesar’s most famous line, *I came, I saw, I conquered*.

Falstaff proffers advice. “‘Be not too familiar with Poins, for he misuses thy favours so much that he swears thou art to marry his sister Nell!

“‘Repent as thou mayest at idle times.

“‘And so, farewell!

“‘Thine, by yea and no—which is as much as to say, as thou *usest* him!—*Jack* Falstaff with my familiars, *John* with my brothers and sisters, and *Sir John* with *all Europe!*”

Poins stares at the paper, amazed. “My lord, I’ll steep this letter in *sack* and make him *eat* it!”

“That’s to make him eat *twenty* of his words!” laughs Harry. “But *do* you use me thus, Ned?—*must* I marry your sister?”

Poins laughs, too. “God send the wench no *worse* fortune! But I never *said* so.”

The prince looks around at the city’s peaceful streets. “Well, thus we play the fools with the time, as the spirits of the wise sit in the clouds and mock us,” he murmurs, pocketing the letter. “Is your master here in London?”

“Yes, my lord,” says Bardolph.

“Where sups he? Doth the old boar feed in the old frank?”—sty.

Bardolph nods. “At the old place, my lord, in Eastcheap.”

“What company?”—with whom?

The pert page replies, with facetious reverence, “*Ephesians*, my lord, of the *old church!*”—hearty drinkers.

“Sup any women with him?”

“None, my lord, but old Mistress Quickly and Mistress Doll Tearsheet,” the boy reports.

Prince Harry rolls his eyes, hearing the younger woman’s working name. “What pagan may *that* be?”

“A proper *gentlewoman*, sir—a kinswoman of my master’s.”

Harry can’t help but laugh; Falstaff has likely told the lad she’s a *niece*—a very affectionate one. “Even such kin as the parish *heifers* are to the town *bull!*” With a mischievous look he glances at Poins. “Shall we steal upon them, Ned, at supper?”

Poins grins. “I am your *shadow*, my lord; I’ll *follow* you!”

The prince again opens the pouch. “Sirrah....” Bardolph looks up. “*You*, boy,” Harry tells the page, “*and* Bardolph, no word to your master yet that I am come to town!—there’s for your silence.”

“I have no tongue, sir,” Bardolph tells him.

“As for *mine*, sir, I will *govern* it,” says the boy, happily fingering the coins.

“Fare you well; go.” Bardolph and the page leave, returning to the tavern.

“This Doll Tearsheet would be some *road*,” says Prince Harry.

“I warrant you,” laughs Poins. “As common as the way between Saint Alban’s and London!”

“How might we behold Falstaff showing himself tonight in his true colours, and not ourselves be seen?”

“Put on two leathern jerkins and aprons, and wait upon him at his table as drawers!”—tapsters.

“From a god to a *bull* was *Jove’s* case—a heavy transformation!” says Harry of an incident in mythology. “From a prince to a *’prentice!*—a low *descension!* That shall be mine.

“For in everything the *purpose* must weigh with”—balance, proportionally—“the folly.” The prince is silent for a moment, thinking again about the cost, in suffering, of the insurrection.

But they will be at war soon enough. “Follow me, Ned!”

Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland faces dissent at home, in the garden of Warkworth Castle. “I pray thee, loving wife, and gentle daughter-in-law, give even way unto my rough affairs!—put you not on the visage of the times, and be, like them, to Percy troublesome!”

“I have given up! I will speak no *more!*” says his wife, tearful in frustration. “Do what you will!—*your* wisdom be your guide!”

“Alas, sweet wife, my *honour* is at pawn!—and nothing but my *going* can redeem it!”

The younger Lady Percy—widow of his son, Hotspur—pleads again: “*Oh*, yet for God’s sake *go not to these wars!*”

She regards the old man angrily. “The time was, Father, that you *broke* your word when you were more endeared to it than *now*—when your own Percy, when my heart’s dear Harry, threw many a northward look to see his father bring up his powers”—arrive with more troops. “But he did long *in vain!*”

“Who *then* persuaded you to *stay at home?*”

“Then were *two honours* lost: yours and your son’s! As for yours, may the God of *heaven* brighten it.

“As for *his*: it stuck upon him as does the *sun’s* in the grey vault of heaven, and by his light did *all the chivalry of England* move to do brave acts!

“He was indeed the mirror wherein the noble youth did *dress* themselves! They had no legs who practised not *his* gait; and speaking thick,”—quickly, intensely, “which nature made his blemish, became the accents of the *valiant*; for those that *could* speak low and tardily would turn their own perfection to abuse, to seem like *him!*”

“So that in speech, in gait, in diet, in affections of delight, in military rules, humours of blood, he was the mark and glass, copy and book, that fashioned others!

“And him—oh wondrous *him!*—oh, *miracle* of men!—*him* did you *leave*—second to none, *unseconded* by you!—to look upon the hideous god of war at *disadvantage!*—to abide in a field where nothing but the sound of *Hotspur’s name* did seem defensible! *So* you left *him!*”

She glares. “*Never*, oh *never*, do his *ghost* the wrong of holding to your honour more precisely and finely with *others* than with *him!*”

“The marshal and the archbishop are *strong!* Let them go alone. Had my sweet Harry had but *half* their numbers, today might I, hanging on Hotspur’s neck, have talked of *Monmouth’s* grave!” Henry of Monmouth—Prince Harry—killed Hotspur at Shrewsbury.

Northumberland wrings his hands sorrowfully. “Beshrew your heart, fair daughter, you do draw my spirits *from* me with new lamenting of ancient oversights! But I *must* go and meet with danger there, or it will seek me in *another* place, and find me worse provided!”

His wife scoffs. “Oh, flee to *Scotland,*” she insists, “till that the nobles and the armed commons”—the rebels’ army—“have of their puissance made a little test!”

Lady Percy concurs. “If they get ground and vantage of the king, *then* join you with them, like a *rib of steel*, to make strength *stronger*; but, for all *our* loves, first let them *try* themselves!

“So did your *son*; *he* was suffered so!

“So became I a *widow,*” she groans, “and never shall have length of life enough to rain with mine eyes upon *remembrance* such that it may *grow* and sprout as high as *heaven* for recordation of my noble husband!”

“Come, come, go in with me,” Northumberland urges the ladies. “’Tis with my mind as with the tide that, swelled up unto its height, makes a still-stand, running neither way.”

But as they enter the dank, dark castle he thinks of the king’s troops—and decides. *Fain would I go to meet the archbishop, but many thousand reasons hold me back!*

*I will resolve for Scotland; there am I, till time and vantage crave my company.*

## Chapter Five Partings

**W**hat the devil hast thou brought there? *Apple-johns?* Thou knowest Sir John cannot endure an apple-john!”

“By the Mass, thou sayest *true!*” says Francis, as the senior tapster lights tapers on the table in a side chamber of an Eastcheap tavern’s second story this evening. “The prince once set a dish of apple-johns before him, and told him *there were five more* Sir Johns!—and, putting on his hat, said, ‘I will now take my leave of these *six* dry, round, old, withered knights!’ It angered him to the heart! He hath not forgot that!”

“Well then, cover and set them down, and see if thou canst find out Sneak’s noise; Mistress Tearsheet would fain hear some *music,*” says the older man sourly. “*Dispatch!* The room where they supped is too hot; they’ll come in straight.

“Sirrah, here anon will be the prince and Master Pains; and they will put on two of our *jerkins* and *aprons!*—and Bardolph hath brought word Sir John must not know of it!”

The boy flashes a grin.

The graying tapster, too, expects amusement. “By the Mass, here will be old utis!”—a fine time. “It will be an excellent stratagem! I’ll see if I can find out Sneak,” he says, leaving to look for the musician. In the passage he goes past Mistress Quickly.

The hostess is steadying Doll Tearsheet, who is much younger, as they enter the private chamber; Doll is feeling weak after leaning out a corridor window to vomit down into the alley. “I’ faith, sweet heart, methinks *now* you are in an excellent good temperality!” says Mistress Quickly. “Your pulsidge beats as extraordinarily as heart would desire; and your colour, I warrant you, is as red as any rose, in good truth, *la!*”

“But, i’ faith, you have drunk too much Canaries—and that’s a marvellous *searching* wine, and it perfumes the blood ere one can say, ‘What’s *this?*’

“How do you now?”

Doll coughs in a harsh spasm, and wipes her mouth. “Better than I was,” she mutters, and clears her throat. She spits on the floor.

Says Mistress Quickly cheerily, “Why, that’s well done. A good heart’s worth gold!” She

hears their customer following. “Lo, here comes Sir John.”

Falstaff is singing heartily, “‘*When Arthur first in court—*’” He enters grandly, followed by his page, but then, wrinkling his nose, he motions to Francis. “Empty the jordan”—the pot holding previous guests’ piss; the boy nods and takes it away. “—‘*And was a worthy king....*’

“How now, Mistress Doll?”

“Sick at the *calm*, yea, good faith!” says Mistress Quickly, patting her associate gently on the back; not uncommonly, seafarers retch just after a storm.

Falstaff regards the women. “So is *all* her sex: if they be once in the *calm*,”—in menses, “they are sick.”

“You muddy rascal, is *that* all the comfort you give me?” moans the bleary-eyed sufferer.

Falstaff has drunk much, too. “You *make* fat rascals, Mistress Doll,” he points out.

“I make them? *Gluttony* and *diseases* make them!—I make them not!”

“If the *cook* help to make the *gluttony*, *you* help to make the *diseases*, Doll! We *catch* from you, Doll, we *catch* from you!”—the venereal variety of illness. “*Grant* that, my poor *Virtue*, grant that!”

She comments on what he has most often *caught*—as in *taken*: “Yes, Joy—our *gold chains* and our *jewels*!”

“Your *broaches*,”—a play on both *brooches* and *openings*, counters Falstaff. “Pearls in pouches!” he adds crudely. “For to serve *bravely* is to come off *halting*, you know.” Says the semblable soldier, “Venturing upon the *chargèd chamber* bravely, coming off the *breach* with his *pike* bent bravely, and unto surgery”—treatment—“*bravely*!”

Doll, still queasy, is not charmed by the bawdy bravado. “*Hang* yourself, you muddy *eel*, *hang* yourself!”

Scolds Mistress Quickly, “By my troth, this is the old fashion!—you two never *meet* but you fall to some *discord*! You are both, i’ good truth, as rheumatic”—she means romantic—“as two dry *toasts*!—you cannot one bear with another’s confirmities!

“What i’ the *good year*? *One* must *bear*—and that must be you!” she tells Doll. “You are the weaker vessel, as they say, the emptier vessel.”

“Can a weak, empty *vessel* bear such a *huge, full hogshead*?”—barrel, demands Doll. “There’s a whole *merchant’s venture* of Bourdeaux stuff”—a shipload of French wine—“in him! You have not *seen* a hulk better stuffed in the hold!”

But she feels a bit better, now. “Come, I’ll be *friends* with thee, Jack,” she says, seeming to soothe. “Thou art going to the wars, and whether I shall ever see thee again or no—

“—*there is nobody cares!*”

Before Falstaff can reply, the old tapster comes to him. “Sir, Ancient Pistol’s below, and would speak with you.”

Doll Tearsheet is angry with the fat old captain’s ensign too. “*Hang* him, the swaggering *rascal*! Let *him* not come hither! It is the *foul-mouthèd*’st rogue in *England*!”

Mistress Quickly’s eyes widen. “If he *swagger*, let him not come *here*! *No*, by my faith; I must live among my neighbours! I’ll no *swaggerers*! I am in good name and infamy with the very best! Shut the door!—there comes no *swaggerers here*! I have not lived all this while to have *swaggering now*! Shut the door, I pray you!”

But Falstaff wants the veteran soldier’s company. “Dost thou *hear*, hostess—“

“Pray ye, *pacify* yourself, Sir John! There comes no *swaggerers* here!”

“Dost thou hear!—it is mine *ancient*!”

“*Tilly-fally*, Sir John, ne’er *tell* me! Your ancient *swaggerer* comes not in my doors!

“I was before Master Tisick, the debuty, t’other day; and, as he said to me—’twas no longer ago than Wednesday last—‘In good faith, neighbour Quickly,’ says he—Master Dumbie, our minister, was near by, then—‘Neighbour Quickly,’ says he, ‘receive those that are *civil*; for,’ said he, ‘you are in an ill name!’

“Now, he said *so*! I can tell whereupon: ‘For,’ says he, ‘you are an honest woman, and well

thought on; therefore take heed what *guests* you receive! Receive,' says he, 'no swaggering *companions!*'—prostitutes' obstreperous customers.

"There comes none here!" She scowls at their laughter. "You would do best to *hear* what he said! *No*, I'll no *swaggerers!*" she says firmly—still missing the deputy's point.

"He's no swaggerer, hostess—a *tame cheater!* I' faith, you may stroke him as gently as a puppy greyhound!" says the knight. "He'd not swagger with a Barbary *hen*, if her feathers turn back in any *show* of resistance!

"Call him up, drawer." The man nods and goes downstairs.

Mistress Quickly considers. "*Cheater*, call you him?" It sounds tame enough. "I will bar no *honest* man my house, nor no cheater. But I do not love *swaggering*, by my troth; I am the worse when one says *swagger!*" She makes an angry shiver. "Feel, masters, how I shake!—look you, I warrant you!"

Doll Tearsheet notes the ample figure's wiggle. "So you do, hostess."

"*Do I?* Yea, in very *truth* do I, as 'twere an *aspen* leaf!" she asserts. "I cannot *abide* *swaggerers!*"

The ensign has climbed the stairs, with Bardolph. "God save you, Sir John!"

"Welcome, Ancient Pistol!" He thrusts a full mug at the man. "Here, *Pistol*, I charge you with a cup of sack!"—as if loading a gun with powder. "Do you *discharge* upon mine hostess!"

"I will discharge upon her, Sir John, *two bullets!*" says Pistol, quaffing again, and emptying the vessel of its wine.

"She is *Pistol*-proof, sir; you shall hardly *offend* her!"

Mistress Quickly frowns. "Come, *I'll* drink to no proofs nor no bullets! I'll drink no more than will do me good; for *no* man's pleasure, *I!*"

Pistol raises his empty cup to Doll. "Then to *you*, Mistress Dorothy!—I will charge *you!*"

"Charge *me?* I *scorn* you, scurvy *companion!* What? You poor, base, rascally, cheating, lack-linen *mate!* *Away*, you mouldy rogue, *away!* I am meat for your *master.*"

The ensign gives her an unctuous smile—and hands her a mug full of wine. "I know you, Mistress Dorothy...."

"*Away*, you cut-purse rascal! You filthy *bung*, away! By this wine, I'll thrust my *knife* in your mouldy chaps, an you play the saucy cuttle with *me!* *Away*, you bottle-ale *rascal!*—you basket-built *stale-juggler*, you!" The slender man has patronized, but not always paid fully, other women of her trade.

She looks disdainfully at his military garb. "*God's light!*—with two points on *your* shoulder!"—insignia of the lowest grade of officer. "Since *when*, I pray you, sir?" She laughs. "*Much!*"

Pistol, furious, starts toward her, reaching for her neck. "God let me not live but I will *murder* Your Ruff for this!"

Falstaff pulls him back, laughing. "No more, *Pistol*; I would not have you *go off* here! Discharge yourself from our *company*, Pistol!"

"No, good Captain Pistol; not *here*, sweet captain!" says Mistress Quickly—prudently promoting him.

"*Captain!*" laughs Doll Tearsheet. "Thou *abominable*, *damnèd cheater*, art thou not *ashamed* to be called captain? If captains were of *my* mind, they would *truncheon* you out for taking their names upon you before you have earned them! *You*, a *captain!*—you slave, *for what?* For tearing a poor whore's ruff in a bawdy-house?"

"He, a *captain!* *Hang* him, the rogue! He lives upon mouldy *stewed prunes* and *dried cakes*"—typical brothel fare. "A *captain!*—'God's light, these villains will make the word as odious as the word *occupy*, which was an excellent *good* word before it was ill *sorted!* Therefore, captains had need *look* to 't!"

Falstaff motions the ensign's antagonist away. "Hark thee thither, Mistress Doll!"

Bardolph tries to edge the drunken Pistol toward the door. "Pray thee, *go down*, good

ancient!”

“Not *I!*” growls Pistol. “I tell thee what, Corporal Bardolph, I could tear *her!*”—a play on Tearsheet. “I’ll be *revenged* on her!”

Even the little page is pushing him toward the stairs. “Pray thee, go down!”

“I’ll see her *damned* first!” shouts Pistol, “to *Pluto’s damnèd lake*, by this hand!—to the infernal deep within *Erebus!*—and, to *torturers* all so vile, ‘*Hold!—hook and line,*’ say I!” he advises the devils. “*Down, down, dogs! Down, factors!*”—*agents*, he cries to Bardolph and the boy. Struggling free, he backs away and draws his sword. “Have we not *iron* here?”

“Good Captain Peesel, be *quiet!*” urges Mistress Quickly. “’Tis very *late*, i’ faith! I *beseek* you, now, aggravate your choler!”

But Pistol straightens, drunkenly defiant. “These be good humours indeed!” he says with sour sarcasm. “Shall *pack-horses* and hollow, *pampered* jades of Asia, which cannot go but thirty mile a day, compare with *Caesar’s*, and with *Cannibal’s*”—he means *Hannibal’s*—“and Trojan *Greeks*? Nay, rather damn them with King *Cerberus*,”—the three-headed dog guarding Hades, “and *let the welkin roar!*”—the *sky thunder*. “Shall we fall foul for *toys*?”—persons who can be played with.

“By my troth, captain, these are *very bitter words!*” protests Mistress Quickly.

“Be *gone*, good ancient!” insists Bardolph. “This will grow to a *brawl* anon!”

Pistol laments the general disorder in England: “*Men* die like *dogs!*—give *crowns* like *pins!* Have we not *iron* here?”

“O’ my word, captain, there’s none such *here*,” Mistress Quickly tells him; *Hiren* is a beautiful and desirable lady in a popular London-stage drama. “What the good-year!—do you think I would deny having *her*? For God’s sake, be quiet!”

Pistol glares at her. “Then *feed* and be *fat*, my fair *Calipolis!*”—a woman in another play who, starving, is offered only lion-meat.

“Come, give ’s some *sack!*” demands the drunk. “*Si fortune me tormente, sperato me contento!*”—if fate torments me, hope contents me. “Fear we broadsides? *No!* Let the fiend give *fire!*” he roars. “Give me some *sack!*”

Now, rage spent, he quiets. “And, sweet heart, lie thou there,” he says, placing his sword on the table. He stumbles to a chair by the wall, sits, and looks at the others mournfully. “Come we full to *points* here?”—sword-points. “And are *et-ceteras* nothing?”

“Pistol, I would be quiet,” warns Falstaff.

“Sweet knight, I *kiss thy neaf!*”—*fist*, says Pistol, blearily affecting courtliness. He sees the knight’s rising anger. “What?” He stares at the floor. “*We* have seen the *seven stars*,” he murmurs, in maudlin reminiscence of shared late hours.

Doll Tearsheet is disgusted. “For God’s sake, thrust him down stairs! I cannot endure such a fustian rascal!”

“*Thrust him downstairs,*” says Pistol, wagging his head. He sneers at her. “Know we not *Galloway nags?*”—ones easily ridden.

Orders Falstaff, “*Quoit him down*, Bardolph, like a shrove *groat*-shilling!”—toss him, like a penance coin substituted for one worth three times as much. “Nay, if he does nothing but *speak* nothing, he shall *be* nothing here!”

Bardolph starts toward Pistol. “Come, get you down stairs.”

“*What!*—shall we have *incision?*” demands the ensign, snatching up his sword. Brandishing it low before him he staggers away. “Shall we *imbrue?*”

“Then *Death* rock me asleep, *abridge* my doleful days! Why then let grievous, ghastly, gaping *wounds* untwine the Sisters Three!”—the Fates, who spin out mortals’ destiny. “*Come*, Atropos, I say!” he cries, summoning the one who cuts the thread of life.

Mistress Quickly scoffs at the sodden soldier. “*Here’s* goodly stuff toward!”

But Falstaff, his face now red, is affronted by the blade. “Give me my rapier, boy!” he tells the page.

"I pray thee, Jack, I *pray* thee, *do not draw!*" cries Doll Tearsheet.

Falstaff unsheathes his blade—and batters poor Pistol with the flat of it, driving him back to the door. "*Get you down stairs!*"

"Here's a goodly tumult!" moans Mistress Quickly. "I'll forswear keeping *house* afore I'll be in these *tirrits* and *frights*! *So!*—*murder*, I warrant now! *Alas, alas!* Put up your naked weapons, *put up your naked weapons!*"

Pistol blinks, trying to clear his vision, as Bardolph guides him away, then down the stairs.

"I pray thee, Jack, be quiet! The rascal's gone," says Doll Tearsheet. "*Ah*, you whoreson, valiant little *villain*, you!" she purrs.

"Methought 'a made a shrewd thrust at your belly! Are you not hurt i' the *groin*?" asks Mistress Quickly, quite concerned.

"Have you turned him out o' doors?" asks Falstaff, as Bardolph returns.

"Yea, sir." He looks upset. "The rascal's *drunk*. You have *hurt* him, sir, i' the shoulder."

"*The rascal!* To brave *me!*"

Doll Tearsheet goes to comfort her patron as he thrusts the blade into its case. "*Ah*, you sweet little *rogue*, you! *Alas*, poor ape; *how*, thou sweatest? Come, let me wipe thy face; come on, you whoreson chops! *Ah*, rogue, i' faith, I love thee: thou art as valorous as *Hector* of Troy, worth *five* of Agamemnon, and *ten times* better than the Nine Worthies! *Ah*, villain...." she says soothingly.

Falstaff still fumes. "A rascally *slave!* I will *toss* the rogue on a *blanket!*"

"*Do*, an thou darest for thy *heart!*" laughs Doll; Falstaff lifts nothing heavier than a flagon of wine. "An thou dost, I'll canvass *thee* between a pair of *sheets!*" she promises.

From the door, the page announces, "The *music* is come, sir."

"Let them play!" cries Falstaff jovially, taking a seat as two men arrive with lute and hautboy. "*Play*, sirs! Sit on my knee, Doll!" He mutters, "A rascally bragging slave... the rogue fled from me like *quicksilver!*"—mercury.

Doll concurs. "I' faith!—and thou followedst him like *church!*"—returned the proper response. She sits on his knee, and strokes his fat cheek. "Thou whoreson, tidy little Bartholomew Fair boar-pig," she says solicitously, "when wilt thou leave *fighting* o' days and *foining* o' nights, and begin to patch up thine old body for *heaven?*"

Mistress Quickly and Bardolph join them, all sitting at the heavy, scarred-pine table.

"*Peace*, good Doll," says Falstaff. "Do not speak like a *Death's-head*—do not bid me remember mine *end.*"

Two men in leather aprons come quietly into the dim chamber and stand at the sideboard. Well aware of the new listeners, Doll now looks thoughtful. "Sirrah, what humour's the *prince* of?"

"A good, *shallow* young fellow," Falstaff allows. "He would have made a good *pantler*"—pantry servant. "He would ha' *chipped bread* well."

Doll laughs. "They say *Poins* has a good wit...."

"*He*, a good *wit*? *Hang* him—*baboon!* His wit's as thick as *Tewksbury mustard*; there's no more imagination in *him* than is in a *mallet!*"

"Why does the prince love him so, then?"

The knight makes a face. "Because their legs are both of a bigness,"—only normal size, he says, with contempt. "And he plays at quoits well; and eats conger and fennel,"—ordinary food, "and drinks at candles' ends for flap-dragons,"—enjoys raisins heated in spoons full of flaming spirits, "and rides the mild *mare*; and jumps over joined-stools with the *boys*; and swears with a good *grace*; and wears his boots very smooth, like unto the size of the leg; and breeds no debate with telling of *indiscreet* stories—and such other frolic faculties 'a has that show a *weak mind* in an able *body!*"

"For the which the prince admits him—for the prince himself is *such another!* The weight of a *hair* will turn the scales between *their* avoirdupois!"

At the back, the servants whisper.



- “Should not this *nave* of a *wheel*”—*hub*, a play on *knave*—“have its *ears* cut off?” asks Prince Harry, irked by Falstaff’s slanders.

- “Let’s *beat* him before his whore!” urges Poins.

- “Look whether the withered elder hath not his *poll* clawed like a *parrot’s!*” says the prince, as Doll’s fingers struggle through the knight’s tangled gray hair.

- “Is it not strange that *desire* should so many years outlive *performance*?” asks Poins dryly. Falstaff pulls her closer. “Kiss me, Doll!”

- “Saturn and Venus”—an unnatural match: age and love—“this year in *conjunction!*” whispers the prince. “What says the almanac to *that*?”

- Poins sees other courtship: “And look whether the fiery *trigon’s* man”—an astrological allusion to red-haired Bardolph—“be not *lisp*ing to his master’s old *tables!*—his *note-book*, his *counsel-keeper!*” The man is flirting with Mistress Quickly.

“Thou dost give me *flattering* busses,”—kisses on the cheek, Falstaff complains to Doll. “By my troth, I kiss thee with a most constant *heart*,” she replies artfully.

“I am old,” sighs Falstaff. “I am old.”

“I love thee better than I loved e’er a scurvy young *boy* of them *all!*”

Falstaff smiles at that dubious compliment. “What stuff wilt have a kirtle made of? I shall receive *money* o’ Thursday!” He sees her skeptical look; he has offered gowns before—but delivered none *after*. “Shalt have a *cap* tomorrow!” he promises. He turns to the musicians. “A *merry* song, come!”

But the men play a soft, wistful ballad.

“It grows late,” says Falstaff. “We’ll to bed.” He regards Doll sadly. “Thou’lt forget me when I am gone.”

She shakes her head. “By my troth, thou’lt set me a-*weeping* an thou sayest so!” she protests. “To *prove* that, I’ll never dress myself handsome till *thy return!*” She sighs, listening to the bittersweet song. “We’ll harken at the end....”

Falstaff motions to the men at the back. “Some sack, Francis.”

“Anon, *anon*, sir!” says the prince, as he and Poins come forward into the light.

Falstaff blinks, staring up at the two. “*Huh!* A bastard son of the king’s! And art not thou *Poins’s* brother?”

“Why, thou *globe* of *sinful continents!*” cries the prince. “What a *life* dost thou lead!”

“A better than thou!” sniffs Falstaff, finishing his mug of wine. “I am a *gentleman*; thou art a *drawer*.”

“Very *true*, sir!—and I come to draw *you* out by *the ears!*”

Mistress Quickly recognizes Harry. “Oh, the Lord preserve thy good grace! By my troth, welcome to London! Now, the Lord bless that sweet face of thine! Oh, Jesu!—are you come from Wales?”

Falstaff rises and beams at the prince. “Thou whoreson, mad *compound* of majesty!” he says warmly. He nods to Doll Tearsheet. “By *this* light flesh and corrupt blood, thou art *welcome!*”

“*What?* You fat fool, I *scorn* you!” she cries, rising and stepping away from the knight, anticipating his rebuke by the prince.

But Poins knows the wily Falstaff’s slippery ways. “My lord, he will drive you out of your revenge and turn all to a *merriment*, if you take not the lead!” he warns.

Harry confronts the knight: “You whoreson *candle-mine*, you!—how *vilely* did you speak of me even now before this honest, virtuous, civil gentlewoman!”

“God’s blessing on your good heart!” says Mistress Quickly. “And so she *is*, by my troth!”

Falstaff regards him calmly. “Didst thou hear me?”

Says the prince, dryly, “Yea, and *you knew me*—just as you did when you *ran away* at Gad’s-hill! You knew *I* was at your back, and spoke it *on purpose* to try my patience!”

“No, no, *no*; not *so!*” insists Falstaff. He mutters, “I did not think thou wast within hearing.”

“I shall drive you to *confess* the wilful abuse!—and then I’ll know how to handle *you!*”

“No *abuse*, Hal, o’ mine honour, no *abuse!*”

Prince Harry scowls. “No?—to *dispraise* me, and call me *pantler*, and *bread-chipper*, and I know not *what?*”

“No abuse, Hal!”

Poins stares. “No abuse?”

“No *abuse*, Ned, i’ the world; honest Ned, *none!*”

“I dispraised him *before the wicked*, so that the wicked might not fall in love with him!—in which doing, I have done the part of a careful *friend* and a *true subject!*—and thy father is to give me *thanks* for it!” he tells the prince. “No *abuse*, Hal! None, Ned, *none!* No, ’faith, boys, *none.*”

Harry shakes his head. “Say now whether pure fear and entire cowardice do not make thee *wrong* this virtuous gentlewoman, to close with *us!*”

“Is *she* of the *wicked?*” he demands. “Is thine *hostess* here of the wicked? Or is thy *boy* of the wicked? Or honest *Bardolph*, whose zeal burns in his nose, of the *wicked?*”

“Answer, thou dead elm, *answer!*” insists Poins.

Falstaff shrugs. “The Fiend hath markèd down Bardolph as irrecoverable, and his face is Lucifer’s privy-kitchen, where he doth nothing but roast *malt-worms!*”—torment drunkards.

“As for the boy, there is a good angel *about* him,”—he means himself, “but the Devil *outbids* for *him, too!*”

“And the women?” asks the prince.

Falstaff regards Doll. “As for *one* of them, she is in hell *already*, and *burns* poor souls!” He alludes to the painful sensation felt by those contracting infections from her. “For the other: *I* owe her money, and whether she be damned for that, I know not.”

“No, I warrant you!” cries Mistress Quickly.

“No, I think thou art not; I think thou art acquitted for *that*,” Falstaff finds. “Marry, but there is *another* indictment upon thee,” he says, “for suffering flesh to be eaten in thy house, contrary to the law—for the which I think thou *wilt* howl.”

Mistress Quickly frowns, thinking he means food. “*All* victuallers do so; what’s a joint of mutton or two in a whole Lent?”

Prince Harry turns to Doll Tearsheet. “*You*, gentlewoman. . . .”

“What says Your Grace?”

Falstaff intervenes: “His *grace* sees that which his *flesh* rebels against!” he argues, affecting righteousness.

Suddenly there is a loud rapping below. “Who knocks so loud at door?” asks Mistress Quickly. “Look to the door there, Francis.” She blushes, remembering that the drawer is actually the heir to England’s throne.

But Prince Harry does go to the entrance. “*Peto*, how now! What *news?*”

The soldier bows, holding the brim of his wide hat in his hands. “The king your father is at Westminster! And there are twenty weak and wearied posts”—horseback messengers—“come from the north!”

“And, as I came along, I met and overtook a dozen *captains*—sweating, knocking at the taverns, and asking at every one for Sir John Falstaff!”

Harry is perturbed. “By heaven, Poins, I feel me much to blame, so idly to profane the precious time, when a tempest of *commotion*, like the south-wind bearing black vapour, doth begin to melt and drop upon our bare, unarmèd heads!

“Give me my sword and cloak!” he tells Poins. He sheds the apron and jerkin, and soon resumes his noble appearance. “Falstaff, good night.” The prince hurries away, followed by Poins, Peto and Bardolph.

Falstaff looks at Doll. “Now comes in the *sweetest morsel* of the night—but *we* must hence and leave it *unpicked!*” He heads toward the chamber entrance. “*More* knocking at the door! How now?” he demands, as Bardolph returns. “What’s the matter?”

“You must away to *court*, sir, immediately!” says the soldier. “A dozen captains stay at door

for you!”

“Pay the musicians, sirrah,” Falstaff tells his page; the lad gives them coins, and they depart happily. “Farewell, hostess; farewell, Doll. You see, my good wenches, how men of *merit* are sought after!” He sighs. “The *undeserver* may sleep when the man of *action* is called on!”

Falstaff dons his purple-plumed hat. “Farewell good wenches! If I be not sent away post-haste, I will see you again ere I go.”

“I cannot speak,” says Doll Tearsheet. “If my heart be not ready to burst... Well, sweet Jack, have a care of thyself.”

“Farewell, *farewell!*” he says gallantly.

And so the soldiers and a boy head off to war.

“Well, fare thee well!” calls Mistress Quickly. “I have known thee these twenty-nine years, come peascod-time; but an honest and truer-hearted man—”

He is gone. *Well, fare thee well,* she thinks.

Then Bardolph calls from below: “Mistress Tearsheet!”

“What’s the matter?” asks Mistress Quickly.

“Good Mistress Tearsheet, come to my master!”

“Oh, run, Doll, *run*; run, good Doll!” urges Mistress Quickly. “Come!”

Loosening the strings of her bodice, the younger woman hurries down the stairs.

Alone, Mistress Quickly takes a seat. And she quietly begins to cry.

## Chapter Six Haunting Echoes

**K**ing Henry IV, dressed in a robe, works in the study near his bedchamber. He rises, distraught, from his writing desk and summons a page. “Go call the Earls of Surrey and of Warwick; but, ere they come, bid them o’er-read these letters, and well consider of them. Make good speed!” The boy bows and hurries away with the papers.

The king paces, then pauses at a high window of the palace at Westminster, looking down at the Thames, then northeast toward the city proper.

*How many thousand of my poorest subjects are at this hour asleep?*

*O Sleep, O gentle Sleep, nature’s soft nurse, how have I frightened thee that thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down and steep my senses in forgetfulness? Why rather, Sleep, lie’st thou in smoky cribs, upon uneasy pallets stretching thee, then hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber, than in the perfumèd chambers of the great, under the costly canopies of state, and lulled with sounds of sweetest melody?*

*O thou dull god, why liest thou with the vile in loathsome beds, and leavest the kingly couch unto a watch-call or a common ’larum-bell?*

*Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast seal up the ship-boy’s eyes, and rock his brains in the cradle of a rude, imperious surge, and in the visitation of the winds that take the ruffian billows by the top, curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them with deafening clamour in the slippery cloud such that, with the hurly, death itself awakes!*

*Canst thou, O partial Sleep, give thy repose to the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude, but in the calmest and most stillest night, with all appliances and means, to boot, deny it to a king?*

*Then happy, lowly, lie down! Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.*

The visiting earls arrive.

“Many good morrows to Your Majesty,” says Warwick, bowing.

“Is it good *morrow*, lords?”

“’Tis one o’clock, and past,” Surrey tells him.

“Why, then, good morrow to you, my lords. Have you read o’er the letters that I sent you?”

“We have, my liege.”

“Then you perceive the body of our *kingdom*—how *foul* it is, what rank *diseases* grow, and with what *danger*, near the heart of it!”

“It is as yet but as a body *distempered*,” says Warwick, “which to its former strength may be restored with good advice and a little medicine. My lord Northumberland will soon be cooled,” he assures the king; they have yet to learn of Percy’s flight to Scotland.

Henry again paces, feverishly. “Oh, God, that one might read the book of Fate, and see the revolution of the times make *mountains* level, and the continent, weary of solid firmness, *melt itself* into the sea!—and other times see the beachy girdle of the ocean too *wide* for *Neptune’s* hips!—see how chances *mock*, and changes fill the cup of *alteration* with divers liquors!

“Oh, if this were seen, the happiest youth, viewing his progress through—what perils past, what crosses to ensue—would shut the book, and sit him down and die!

“’Tis not *ten years* gone since Richard and Northumberland, great *friends*, did *feast* together—and in *two years* after were they at *war*! It is but eight years since this Percy was the man nearest my soul—who like a *brother* toiled in my affairs, and laid his love and life under my foot—yea, for my sake, even to the eyes of *Richard* gave him *defiance*!

“But which of you was nearby—your cousin Neville, as I may remember,” he tells Warwick, “when Richard, with his eyes brimful of tears, then checked and berated by Northumberland, did speak these words, now proven *prophecy*: ‘Northumberland, thou *ladder* by the which my cousin Bolingbroke ascends my throne,—’

“—though then, God knows, I had no such intent, but that *necessity* so bowed the state that I and greatness were *compelled* to kiss—

“—‘*the time shall come*,’—thus did he bellow it—‘the time will come that *foul sin*, gathering head, shall *break into corruption*!’” Henry regards the lords. “So he went on, *foretelling* this same time’s condition, and the division of our amity!”

Warwick is unimpressed. “There is a history in *all men’s* lives resembling the nature of times deceased, the which observèd, a man may prophesy with a near aim on the main chance of things as yet not come to life, which in their seeds and weak beginnings lie intreasurèd.

“Such things become the hatch and brood of time; and by the necessary form of this, King Richard might create a perfect guess that great Northumberland, then false to *him*, would of that seed grow to a *greater* falseness—which should not find a ground to root upon, unless on *you*.”

“Are these things then *necessary*?” wonders Henry. He faces the lords. “Then let us *meet* them like *imperatives*! And that same word even *now* cries out on us—they say the bishop and Northumberland are *fifty thousand strong*!”

Warwick replies, calmly, “It cannot *be*, my lord; rumour doth *double* a voice, as does the echo, in numbers of the *feared*.”

“Please it Your Grace to go to bed,” he urges. “Upon my soul, my lord, the powers that you already have sent forth shall bring this prize in very easily!

“To comfort you the more: I have received the certain assurance that *Glendower* is *dead*!” He watches as the monarch weighs what effect the Welsh legend’s demise will have on the rebellion.

“Your Majesty hath been ill this fortnight,” he says, “and these unseasoned hours perforce must add unto your sickness.”

Wearily, the king nods assent. “I will take your counsel.”

But Richard’s prophetic words continue to vex him. “And were these inward wars once in hand, we would go, dear lords, unto the Holy Land.”

Henry releases his lieutenants, and retires to a troubled sleep.

## Chapter Seven Called to the Fight

On this bright morning in Gloucestershire, almost a hundred miles west of London, an elderly justice of the peace emerges from his house, happy to greet the gentleman at his door, a neighbor—and to see the men waiting outside with him. “Come on, come on, *come on*, sir!” he cries. “Give me your *hand*, sir, give me your hand, sir!”

He and the other county justice shake hands warmly. “An early stirrer, by the rood! And how doth my good cousin Silence?”

“Good morrow, good cousin Shallow.”

“And how doth my cousin, your bedfellow? And your fairest daughter and mine, my god-daughter Ellen?”

“Alas, a black ousel, cousin Shallow!” jests Silence, on *fairest*; the young woman is not pale and blonde.

“By yea and no, sir, I dare say my cousin William is become a good scholar! He is at Oxford still, is he not?”

“Indeed, sir, to my cost,” grumbles Justice Silence.

“He must, then, to the Inns o’ Court”—London’s law colleges—“shortly. I was once of Clement’s Inn,”—a student residing there, “where I think they will talk of ‘mad Shallow’ yet!”

Silence grins. “You were called ‘*lusty* Shallow’ then, cousin.”

Shallow laughs, remembering. “By the Mass, I was called *anything*—and I would have *done* anything indeed, too!—and *roundly*, too! There was I, and little John Penny of Staffordshire, and black-haired George Barnes, and Francis Pickbone, and Will Squeel, a Cotswold man!—you had not four such swashbucklers in all the Inns o’ Court again!

“*And*, I may say to you, we knew where the *bona-robas*”—fashionable prostitutes—“were, and had the best of them all at commandment!

“Then was Jack Falstaff, now *Sir John*, a *boy*, and page to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk.”

Silence is surprised. “*This* Sir John, cousin, that comes hither anon about soldiers?”

Shallow nods. “The same Sir John, the very *same*! I saw him break Skogan’s head at the court-gate, when ’a was a cracker not thus high! And the very same day did *I* fight with one Sampson Stockfish, a fruiterer, behind Gray’s Inn!

“Jesu, *Jesu*, the mad days that I have spent!” He shakes his head mournfully. “And to see how many of my old acquaintance are dead!”

“We shall all follow, cousin,” says Silence.

“Certain, ’tis certain,” notes Shallow. “Very sure, very sure. Death, as the Psalmist saith, is certain to all. All shall die.” He ponders for a moment, then looks up. “How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair?”

“By my troth, I was not there,” Silence admits, unable to cite the current pricing for castrated bulls.

Justice Shallow sighs. “Death *is* certain. Is old Double of your town living yet?”

“Dead, sir.”

Shallow shakes his head again. “Jesu, Jesu, dead! ’A drew a good bow; and dead! ’A shot a fine shoot; John a Gaunt loved him well, and betted much money on his head. Dead! ’A would have clapped i’ the *clout*”—struck the target’s center—“from *twelve* score,” he notes of the archer’s skill, “and carried you aforehand a shaft at fourteen, fourteen-and-a-half, such that it would have done a man’s heart good to see!” Again he stops to think. “How a score of ewes now?”

“Thereafter as they be”—according to merit, Silence tells him. “A score of *good* ewes may be worth ten pounds.”

Shallow muses. "And is old Double dead...."

Justice Silence points to the road. "Here come two of Sir John Falstaff's men, as I think."

The soldiers approach the justices. "Good morrow, honest gentlemen," says Bardolph. "I beseech you, which is Justice Shallow?"

"I am Robert Shallow, sir—a poor esquire of this county, and one of the king's justices of the peace. What is your good pleasure with me?"

"My captain, sir, commends himself to you: my captain is '*Sir John Falstaff—a tall gentleman*, by heaven, and a most *gallant leader!*'"

"He greets me *well*, sir!" says Shallow, of his ever-immodest old friend. "I knew him a good *back-sword* man!" he laughs. "How doth the good knight? May I ask how my lady his wife doth?"

"Sir, pardon; a *soldier* is better accommodated than with a *wife*," says Bardolph knowingly.

Shallow laughs. "It is well said, in faith, sir!—and it is well said in *deed*, too!" He chuckles. "'Better *accommodated!*'—it is *good*; yea, indeed, is it! Good *phrases* are surely, and ever were, very commendable.

"'Accommodated'—it comes of '*accommodo*.' Very good; a good phrase!"

"Pardon me, sir; I have heard the *word*," says Bardolph. "*Phrase* call you it? By this good day, I know not the phrase; but I will maintain the *word* with my sword to be a *soldier*-like word, and a word of exceeding good commendation, by heaven! 'Accommodated'—that is when a man is, as they say," he winks—"'*accommodated!* For when a man is being where 'a may be thought to *be accommodated*, it is an excellent *thing!*'"

Shallow concurs—based on memory: "It is! Very just!"

"Look, here comes good Sir John!" He hurries forward to meet the knight, who is marching his new troops down the broad highway. "Give me your good hand, give me Your Worship's good *hand!* By my troth, you look *well*, and bear your years very well! *Welcome*, good Sir John!"

"I am glad to see *you* well, good Master Robert Shallow!" Falstaff turns to the other justice. "Master Surecard, as I think?"

"No, Sir John, it is my cousin Silence, in commission with me."

Falstaff smiles "Good Master *Silence*, it well befits you should be of the *peace*."

The gentleman has heard that quip before, but he nods. "Your Good Worship is welcome."

Falstaff pulls off his hat and wipes his brow. "*Fie*, this is hot weather! Gentlemen, have you provided me here half a dozen sufficient men?"

"Marry, have we, sir!" says Justice Shallow. "Will you sit?"

"Let me see them, I beseech you."

"Where's the roll, where's the roll," the justice mumbles to himself, patting about his coat, "where's the roll? Let me see, let me see, let me see. So, so...." He finds the list. "Yea, marry, sir." He peers at the paper and reads the first name. "Ralph Mouldy!" he says aloud. "Let them appear as I call," he tells Silence, "let them do so, let them do so. Let me see; where is Mouldy?"

"Here, an't please you."

"What think you, Sir John?" asks Shallow. "A good-limbed fellow; young, strong, and of good friends." Ralph is about thirty.

Falstaff eyes the yeoman. "Art thou Mouldy?"

"Yea, an't please you."

"Then 'tis time thou wert *used*," says the knight.

Shallow is tickled. "Most *excellent*, i' faith! Things that are mouldy lack use! Very singular good! In faith, well said, Sir John, very well said!"

Falstaff tells the justice to mark the name of the first man inducted. "Prick him."

"I was *pricked* well enough before," says Mouldy, "and you could have let me alone! My old dame will be *undone* now, for no one to do her husbandry, and her drudgery! You need not to have pricked *me*; there are other men fitter to go out than I!"

"Go to! Peace, Mouldy; you shall go," Falstaff orders. "Mouldy, it is time you were spent."

“*Spent!*” Ralph does not want to underwrite the war with his life.

Shallow waves him back. “Peace, fellow, *peace*; stand aside! Know you where you *are*?” he demands, as a butterfly alights in the sunshine warming his hat. “As for the others, Sir John, let me see... Simon Shadow!”

“Yea, marry, let me have him to *sit* under!” says Falstaff. “He’s likely to be a cool soldier.”

The justice looks to the waiting men. “Where’s Shadow?”

“Here, sir.”

Falstaff regards him carefully. “Shadow, whose son art thou?”

“My *mother’s* son, sir.”

“Thy mother’s *sun* likely enough!” he laughs. “And thy *father’s* shadow! So the son of the female is the shadow of the male; it is often, indeed, only that much of the father’s substance!”—because someone else is the real one.

“Do you like *him*, Sir John?” asks Shallow.

Falstaff nods. “A Shadow will serve for summer. Prick him.” *For we have a number of shadows to fill up in the muster-book*, he thinks, concerning the places left by men who have bribed him to find surrogates for them.

Shallow calls, “Thomas Warp!”

Falstaff looks over the country crew. “Where’s he?”

“Here, sir.”

“Is thy name Warp?” he asks the disheveled, decrepit man.

“Yea, sir.”

“Thou art a very ragged warp,” says Falstaff, thinking of the *woof and warp* of woven fabric.

“Shall I prick him down, Sir John?”

The knight shakes his head. “It were superfluous—for his apparel has been *built* upon his back, and the whole frame relies upon *pins*! Prick him no *more*.”

Shallow laughs heartily. “You *can* do it, sir; you *can* do it! I commend you well!” He again examines his list. “Francis Feeble!”

“Here, sir.”

“What trade art thou, Feeble?” asks Falstaff

“A woman’s tailor, sir.”

“Shall I *prick* him, sir?” laughs Shallow.

“You may.” He sees Feeble’s scowl. “But if he had been a *man’s* tailor, he’d ha’ prickèd *you*.” Falstaff regards the pale and precise young man. “Wilt thou make as many holes in an enemy’s army as thou hast done in a woman’s petticoat?”

“I will do my good *will*, sir; you can have no more.”

“Well *said*, good woman’s tailor! Well *said*, courageous Feeble!” cries Falstaff. “Thou wilt be as valiant as the wrathful *dove* or most magnanimous *mouse*!”

“Prick the woman’s tailor.” He regards the others prospects. “Well, Master Shallow—*deeper*, Master Shallow.”

“I would *Warp* might have gone, sir!” protests Feeble.

“I would thou wert a *man’s* tailor, so that thou mightst *mend* him,” counters Falstaff, “and make him fit to go. I cannot pull one to be a private soldier who is the leader of so many thousands!”—of parasites. “Let that suffice, most forcible Feeble.”

“It shall *suffice*, sir,” grumbles the tailor.

Sir John glares. “I am *bound* to thee, *reverend* Feeble. Who is next?”

“Peter Bullcalf, o’ the Green.”

“Yea, marry, let’s see *Bullcalf*!”

But a thin, sallow man moans weakly, “Here, sir.” He gives out a loud, barking cough.

“Fore God, a likely fellow,” says Falstaff dryly. “Come, bring me Bullcalf, till he roar *again*.”

The man is taken aback. “Oh, Lord! Good my lord captain—”

“*What?*—dost thou roar before thou art pricked?”

“Oh, *Lord*, sir! I am a *diseasèd* man!”

“What disease hast thou?”

“A whoreson *cold*, sir; and *cough*, sir—which I caught with ringing-in the *king’s* affairs, upon his coronation-day, sir!”

“Come, thou shalt go to the wars in a *robe*,” says Falstaff comfortingly. “We wilt have *away* thy cold!—and will take such care that thy friends shall *brag* about thee!”

Bullcalf, aware of the sarcasm, blows his nose—loudly.

“Is he all?” the knight asks Justice Shallow.

“Here is two *more* called than your number; you must have but *four* here, sir. And so, I pray you, go in with me to dinner! Come.”

“I will go *drink* with you, but I cannot tarry dinner. I *am* glad to see you, by my troth, Master Shallow!”

The justice, noting the knight’s considerable girth, looks relieved about the lunch. “Oh, Sir John, do you remember since we lay all night in the Windmill”—a questionable inn—“in Saint George’s field?”

Falstaff laughs. “No more of *that*, good Master Shallow, no more of *that!*”

“*Ha!* ’Twas a *merry* night! And is Jane Nightwork alive?”

“She lives, Master Shallow.”

Shallow frowns. “She never would away with *me*.”

“Never, *never*; she would always say she could not *abide* Master Shallow!”

“By the Mass, I *could* anger her to the heart!” laughs Shallow, remembering. “She was then a *bona-roba*. Doth she hold her own well?”

Falstaff shakes his head. “Old, *old*, Master Shallow.”

Shallow shrugs. “Aye, she must be old, she cannot *choose* but be! Certainly she’s old—one called Nightwork, old by *night work* before I came to Clement’s Inn.”

“That’s fifty-five year ago,” Justice Silence points out.

Shallow says to the slightly younger man, smiling fondly, “*Ah*, cousin Silence, that thou hadst seen that that this knight and I have seen! *Eh*, Sir John, said I well?”

Falstaff nods. “We have heard the chimes at *midnight*, Master Shallow!”

“That we have, that we have, that we have. I’ faith, Sir John, we *have!* Our watch-word was ‘*Amen* boys!’”—*drink up!* “Come, let’s to dinner; come, let’s to dinner! Jesus, the *days* that we have seen! Come, *come!*”

He and Justice Silence amble inside with the large Londoner to eat and drink.

—

Bullcalf approaches a soldier. “Good Master Corporal Bardolph, stand as my *friend*, and here’s *four ten-shillings* in French crowns for you!” He offers the silver coins. “In very truth, sir, I had as lief be hanged, sir, as go!” Still, he adds, as Bardolph takes the money, “And yet, for mine *own* part, sir, I do not care,” he contends, “but rather because I am *unwilling*—and have a desire to stay with my *friends*. . . else, sir, I did not care, for mine own part, so much—”

“Go to; stand aside.” Bardolph waves him away.

Mouldy comes forward. “And, good Master Corporal Captain, for my old wife’s sake, stand as my friend! She has nobody to do anything about her when I am gone; and she is old, and cannot help herself. You shall have *forty*, sir!” He hands over the coins.

“Go to; stand aside,” says Bardolph, taking the money. Mouldy joins Bullcalf.

Feeble now tells the corporal, “By my troth, I care not! A man can die but once. We owe God a death. I’ll ne’er bear a base mind! An’t be my destiny, so; an’t be not, so. No man is too good to serve ’s *prince!* And let it go which way it will, he that dies *this* year is acquitted for the next.”

Bardolph knows that means the man has no money. “Well said; thou’rt a good fellow.”

“Faith, I’ll bear no base mind!” insists Feeble, as Falstaff returns with the justices.

“Come, sir, which men shall I have?” the knight asks Shallow.



“Four, those which you please.”

Says Bardolph to Falstaff, “Sir, a word with you.” They step aside and speak privately. “I have three pound to free Mouldy and Bullcalf.” He has pocketed four.

“Go to! Well!”

Justice Shallow wants to proceed. “Come, Sir John, which four will you have?”

“Do you choose *for* me.”

Shallow looks at the men. “Marry, then: Mouldy, Bullcalf, Feeble and Shadow.”

“*Mouldy* and *Bullcalf*?” Falstaff wags his head, frowning in disapproval. “As for *you*, Mouldy, stay at home till you are *past* service; and for your part, Bullcalf, *grow* till you come *unto* it! I will none of you.” The suborners tramp away, heading home.

“Sir John, Sir John, do not yourself *wrong*,” protests Shallow. “They are your likeliest men, and I would have you served with the best!”

“Will you tell *me*, Master Shallow, how to choose a man?” demands Falstaff haughtily. “Care I about the limb, the thewes, the stature, bulk and big *assemblance* of a man? Give me the *spirit*, Master Shallow!

“Here’s Warp; *you* see what a ragged *appearance* is. But he shall charge and discharge with the motion of a *pewterer’s* hammer, come on and off swifter than he that gibbets on a *brewer’s* bucket!”—a street boy snagging a swig from one hung at either end of a shoulder-bar.

He looks at the slender conscript. “And *this* half-faced fellow, Shadow—give *me* this same man! He presents no mark to the enemy: the foeman may with as great aim level at the edge of a penknife! And for a *retreat*, how *swiftly* will this Feeble, the woman’s tailor, run off! Oh, give me the *spare* men—and spare me the great ones!”

Falstaff motions to the corporal. “Put a caliver”—a light musket—“into Warp’s hand, Bardolph.”

Says Bardolph, showing him how to wield it, “Hold, Warp; traverse *thus*, thus, thus....”

“Come, manage me your caliver!” commands Falstaff. “*So!* Very well! Go to! *Very* good, *exceeding* good!” he cries, as Warp fumbles with the gun. “Oh, give me always a little, lean, old, chapt, bald-spot! Well *done*, i’ faith, Warp!—thou’rt a good scab!

“Hold, there’s a *tester* for thee!” he says, handing the man a small coin.

Old Justice Shallow watches as the weapon slips again from Warp’s hands. “He is not his craft’s master; he doth not do it right.

“I remember, at Mile-end Green when I lay at Clement’s Inn, I was then *Sir Dagonet* in Arthur’s show”—he played that king’s fool in the law-college pageant. “There was a little, quivering fellow, and ’a would manage you his piece thus”—he thrusts an imaginary musket as one would a spear—“and ’a would *about* and *about*, and come you in, and come you in! ‘*Rah, tah, tah!*’ would ’a say; ‘*Bounce!*’ would ’a say!” he cries, springing back. “And *away* again would ’a go, and *again* would ’a come!

“I shall ne’er see such a fellow!” he cackles, savoring the reminiscence.

“These fellows will do *well*, Master Shallow,” says Falstaff; he will be paid again to replace men killed in battle. “God keep you, Master Silence! I will not use many words with you: fare you well, gentlemen both!

“I thank you. I must a dozen mile tonight. Bardolph, give the soldiers coats.” The corporal signals for one of his men to unpack some very worn ones for the king’s newest warriors.

“Sir John, the Lord bless you!” says Justice Shallow. “God prosper your affairs! God send us *peace!*”

“At your return, visit our house! Let our old acquaintance be renewed; peradventure I will go *with ye* to the *court!*”

“Fore God, I would you *would*, Master Shallow!” The knight hopes to be rewarded with just such favor after the war.

“Go to; I have *spoken the word*,” Shallow assures him. “God keep you!” he says, heading back to the house with Justice Silent.

“Fare you well, gentle gentlemen!” The captain turns to the corporal. “On, Bardolph; lead the men away.”

While the tattered troops straggle down the road, Falstaff thinks ahead.

*As I return, I will fetch off these justices! He intends to fleece them.*

*I do see to the bottom of Justice Shallow! Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of lying! This same starved justice hath done nothing but prate to me of the wildness of his youth, and the feats he hath done about Turnbull Street—and every third word a lie, duer paid to the hearer, and greater than the Turk’s tribute!—a ruler’s ransom.*

*I do remember him at Clement’s Inn: like a ‘man’ made after supper out of a cheese-paring!—wax. When ‘a was naked he was for all the world like a forked radish with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife! ‘A was so shorn that his thickest dimension were invisible to any sight! ‘A was the very essence of famine, yet lecherous as a monkey, and the whores called him mandrake!*

*‘A came ever in the rearward of fashion, and sung those tunes to the overscutched huswives—most popular prostitutes—that he heard the cart-men whistle at, and swore they were his fancies or his good-nights!*

*And now is this Vice’s-dagger—an actor’s wooden one—become a squire, and talks as familiarly of John a Gaunt as if he had been sworn brother to him!—and I’ll be sworn a’ ne’er saw him but once, in the tilt-yard—and then the noble lord burst his head for crowding in past the marshal’s men!*

*I saw it, and told John of Gaunt he beat his own name, for you might have thrust Shallow and all his apparel into an eel-skin! The case of a treble hautboy—a long, thin wind instrument—was a mansion for him, a court!*

*And now has he land and beefs! Well, I’ll be acquainted with him, if I return; and it shall go hard but I will make him a philosopher’s two stones to me! The mythical stone offers renewed youth and limitless wealth; stones is a term for testes.*

*If the minnow be fare for the pike, I see no reason in the law of Nature but I may snap at him! Let time shape it, and there’s an end.*

Wiping sweat from his forehead, Falstaff trudges along after his contingent of patriots.

## Chapter Eight Confrontation

The Archbishop of York and other chiefs of the rebellion have led their troops to a wooded area of Yorkshire, in northern England. “What is this forest called?” he asks.

“‘Tis Gaultree Forest, an’t shall please Your Grace,” says Hastings.

“Here stand, my lords,” orders the archbishop, as he dismounts, “and send discoverers forth to know the numbers of our enemies.”

“We have sent forth already,” Hastings tells him; the scouts have ridden toward the king’s forces.

“‘Tis well done.” But before the ranks of soldiers are moved forward to take up positions, he confers with their commanders.

“My friends and brethren in these great affairs, I must acquaint you that I have received new-dated letters from Northumberland, their cold intent, tenor and substance thus: here doth he *wish* his person, with such powers as might hold sortance with his quality—the which he *could not levy!*” The other lords realize, with anger and disgust, that their ally has deserted them.

“Whereupon he is retired, to ripen *his* growing fortunes, to *Scotland!*—and concludes with hearty prayers that our attempts may overlive the hazard and fearful meeting of their opposite!”

Mowbray is appalled. “Thus do the high hopes we had in him touch ground and dash themselves to pieces!”

One of the scouts is returning; he rides up to the noblemen and dismounts.

“Now what news?” demands Hastings.

“West of this forest, scarcely off a mile, in goodly form comes on the *enemy!*—and, by the ground they hide, I judge their number upon or near the rate of *thirty thousand!*”

“Just the proportion that we gave them out,” notes Mowbray. “Let us sway on, and face them in the field!”

An emissary in armor approaches from the king’s army on horseback, under a staff flying a white flag.

“What well-appointed leader fronts us here?” asks the archbishop, watching the rider and his two attendants.

“I think it is my lord of Westmoreland,” says Mowbray.

The nobleman comes to Mowbray. “Health and fair greeting from our general, the *prince*—Lord John, and Duke of Lancaster!”

The archbishop speaks. “Say on, my lord of Westmoreland, in peace. What doth concern your coming.”

Westmoreland turns to the churchman. “Then, my lord, unto Your *Grace* do I in chief address the substance of my speech.

“If *rebellion* came like *itself*—in base and abject *routs* led on by bloody *youth*, guarded with *rags*, and countenanced by *boys in beggary!*—I say, if *damnèd commotion* so appeared, in its true, native and most *proper* shape—*you*, reverend father, and these noble lords, had not been here, to dress the ugly form of base and bloody *insurrection* with your fair honours!

“*You*, lord archbishop—whose jurisdiction is by the *civil peace* maintained, whose beard the silver hand of *peace* hath touchèd, whose learning and good letters hath tutored *peace*, whose white vestments figure *innocence*, the dove and very blessèd *spirit* of peace!—wherefore do you so *ill-translate* yourself out of the speech of peace, that bears such grace, into the harsh and boisterous tongue of *war?*—turning your books to *graves*, your ink to *blood*, your pens to *lances*, and your divine language into a *trumpet* and a *signal for war?*”

The archbishop is defiant. “*Wherefore* do I this?—so the question stands.

“Briefly, to *this* end: we are all *diseasèd*, and through our surfeiting in *wanton hours* have brought ourselves into a *burning fever*—of which disease our late King Richard, being infected, *died!* And we must *bleed* for it!

“But, my most noble lord of Westmoreland, I take nought on me here as a physician, nor do I as an enemy to peace troop in the throngs of military men, but rather *show* awhile as fear-inspiring War to *diet* rank minds sick from good fortune, and *purge* the obstructions which begin to stop-up our very veins of *life!*”

Westmoreland’s scorn shows; war is a harsh medicine for political indigestion.

“Hear me more plainly,” says the archbishop. “I have in equal balance justly weighed what wrongs our arms may do, what wrongs we suffer—and find our *griefs* heavier than our offences.

“We see which way the stream of time doth run, and are *enforcèd* from our most quiet theme by the rough torrent of *occasion!*—and we have the summary of all our griefs, when time shall serve, to show *in articles*,”—written complaints, “which long ere *this* we offered to the king, but might by no suit gain our audience! When we are *wronged* and would unfold our griefs, we are denied access unto his person, even by those men that have done us *most* wrong!

“The dangers of the days whose memory is written on the earth with yet-appearing blood are but newly gone, and the example of every minute’s present instance now hath put us in these ill-beseeming arms, not to *break* peace, or any branch of it, but to *establish* here a peace *indeed*, concurring in both name and *quality!*”

Westmoreland scoffs. “When ever yet was your appeal *denied?* Wherein have *you* been gallèd by the king?

“What peer hath been *suborned* to greaten *you*, that you should *seal* this *lawless, bloody, forgèd* book of rebellion with a seal *divine*, and *consecrate* commotion’s bitter edge?”

“My brother *in general*—the *commonwealth!*” is the archbishop’s answer. “I make my quarrel in *particular* for a brother *torn* in a household of *cruelty!*” While the priest had supported Richard’s overthrow, his brother, the Earl of Wiltshire, did not; he was executed by Bolingbroke’s forces at Bristow.

Westmoreland shakes his head. “There is no *need* of any such redress!—or if there were, it belongs not to *you!*”

“Why *not* to him, in part?” demands Mowbray, “and *to us all* that felt the bruises of the days before, and suffer the condition of *these* times to lay a heavy and unequal hand upon our honours!”

Westmoreland regards him dourly. “Oh, my good Lord Mowbray, construe the times as they *require* and you shall say, *indeed*, it is the *time*, and not the king, that doth you injuries!

“Yet for *your* part, it not appears to me that you should have *an inch* of any ground to build a grief on, from either the king’s early time or in the present! Were you not restored to all the Duke of Norfolk’s *signories*, your noble and right-well-remembered father’s?”

“What thing in *honour* had my father lost that *need* be revived and breathèd into me?” counters Mowbray. “The king that *loved* him as the state stood *then*”—Richard II—“was force-perforce *compelled* to banish him!”—by Lord Bolingbroke’s challenge to duel.

He remembers his father’s preparing for single combat in chivalry, a fight using lances. “And when Harry Bolingbroke and he, being mounted and both rousèd in their seats, their neighing coursers daring the spur, their armèd staves in charge, their visors down, their eyes afire sparking through slits in steel, and the loud trumpet blowing them together—then, *then*, when there was nothing could have stayed my father from the breast of Bolingbroke—!”

He flushes, feeling yet again a deep frustration over Richard’s sudden intervention. “Oh, when the king did throw his warder down, *his own life* hung upon the *staff* he threw!—then threw he down *himself*, and all their lives that, by indictment and by dint of sword, have since miscarried under Bolingbroke!”—today, King Henry IV.

“You speak now, Lord Mowbray, you know not what!” says Westmoreland. “The Earl of Hereford”—Henry—“was reputed then the most valiant gentlemen in England!

“Who knows on whom Fortune *would* have smiled? But if your father *had* been victor there, he ne’er had borne it out of *Coventry!*—for all the country in a general voice cried *hate* upon him!—and all their prayers and love were set on *Hereford*, whom they doted on, and blessed, and graced indeed more than the king!

“But this is mere digression from my purpose.

“Here come I from our princely general to know your griefs, and to tell you from his grace that he will give you audience. Wherein it shall appear that your demands are *just*, you shall *enjoy* them, everything set aside that you might so much as *think* enmities!”

Mowbray snorts. “He hath *but by force* been *compelled* to offer us this!—and it proceeds from *policy*, not love!”

“Mowbray, you overween to take it so! This offer comes from *mercy*, not from fear! For, *lo!*—within sight our *army* lies, *all*, upon mine honour, too confident to give admittance to a *thought* of fear! Our force is more full of names”—noblemen—“than yours, our men more perfected in the use of arms, our armour all as strong, our cause *the best!* Thus *reason* will say our *hearts* should be as good!

“Say you *not* then our offer is *compellèd!*”

“Well, by *my* will we shall admit no parley!” growls Mowbray.

“That argues but the *shame* of your *offence!*” says Westmoreland contemptuously. “A rotten case abides no handling.”

Lord Hastings asks, “Hath Prince John a full commission, in every ample virtue of his father, to hear and absolutely to determine what *conditions* we shall stand upon?”—not fight.

The emissary is annoyed. “That is implicit in the general’s *name!* I muse you make so slight a question!”

The Archbishop of York offers a folded sheet of paper. "Then take, my lord of Westmoreland, this schedule, for it contains our general grievances.

"If each several article herein be *redressed*—all members of our cause, both here and hence, that are insinewed to this action, repaid by a true, *substantial* form, and immediate execution of our wills to us—and to *our* purposes confinèd—we will come within our respective banks again,"—return home, "and knit our powers to the army of *peace*."

Westmoreland takes the document. "This will I show the general.

"Please it you, lords, in sight of both our armies we may meet, and either end in *peace*—which God so frame!—or to the place of difference *call the swords* which must decide it!"

"My lord, we will do so," says the archbishop.

Westmoreland and his men return to Prince John.

Mowbray is frowning as they ride away. "There is a thing within my bosom tells me that no conditions of our peace can stand."

"Fear you not that," says Hastings. "If we can make our peace upon such large terms, ones so absolute as our conditions shall insist upon, our peace shall stand as firm as rocky *mountains!*"

Mowbray shakes his head grimly. "But our *valuation* shall be such that *every slight* and false-derived *cause*—yea, every idle, dull and *wanton* reason shall to the king taste of *this action!*—such that, were our royal allegiances *martyrs* in loyalty, we shall be winnowed with so rough a wind that even our wheat shall seem as light as chaff, and good from bad find no partition!"

But the archbishop fully expects a favorable outcome. "No, *no*, my lord! Note this: the king is *weary* of such daily and piercing grievances!—for he hath found that to end *one* doubt by *death* revives *two greater* in the heirs of *life!* And therefore will he wipe his accounts clean, and keep no tell-tale of ill memory that may repeat its history and loss to new remembrance!

"For full well he knows he cannot precisely *weed* as his misdoubts present occasion; his foes are so enrooted with his *friends* that, plucking to unfix an *enemy* he doth unfasten and shake a friend! So that this land, like an offensive wife who, having enraged him to offer strokes, as he is striking *holds his infant up!*—and thus hangs correction unresolvèd in the arm that was upreared to execution!"

Hastings concurs. "Besides, the king hath so *wasted* all his rods on recent offenders that he now doth lack the very instruments of chastisement! His power, like to a fangless lion, may offer, but not hold!"

"'Tis very true!" says the archbishop. "And therefore be assured, my good lord marshal, if we do now make our atonement *well*, our peace will, like a broken limb united, grow *stronger* for the breaking!"

"Be it *so*," mutters Mowbray. He points toward the south. "Here is returnèd my lord of Westmoreland."

The representative summons them to parley. "The prince is here at hand, pleaseth Your Lordship to meet his grace at equal distance 'tween our armies."

Mowbray turns to their leader. "Your Grace of York, in God's name, then, set forward."

The archbishop nods. "Before, and greet his grace! My lord, we come!" he calls eagerly, mounting his white steed.

Hastings and Mowbray follow him, with their attendants.

**B**etween the two vast, opposing forces their commanders meet. With Prince John of Lancaster are Lord Westmoreland and other officers of the king's army. The young prince greets his opponents. "You are well encountered here, my cousin Mowbray. Good day to you, gentle lord archbishop; and so to you, Lord Hastings; and to all."

He frowns at the priest. "My lord of York, it better showed with *you* when your *flock*, assembled by the bell, encircled you to hear with reverence your exposition on the Holy Text, than now to see you here an *iron* man, cheering a rout of rebels with your drum, turning the Word to the *sword*, and life to *death!*"

“That man who sits within a *monarch*’s heart, and ripens in the sunshine of his favour, should he *abuse* the countenance of the king, *alack*, what mischiefs might he set abroad in shadow of such greatness! With you, lord bishop, it is even so. Who hath not heard it spoken how deep you *were* within the books of God?—to us, the *Speaker* in his parliament, to us, the imagined *voice* of God Himself!—the very opener and intelligencer between the *grace*, the *sanctities* of Heaven and *our* dull workings!

“Oh, who shall believe but you *misuse* the reverence of your place, employ the countenance and grace of Heaven as a false favourite doth his prince’s name, in *deeds dishonourable*! You have ta’en up, under a *counterfeited* zeal for *God*, the subjects of his substitute, *my father*, and against the peace of both *heaven* and *him* have here up-swarmèd them!”

“Good my lord of Lancaster, I am not here against your father’s *peace*,” the archbishop claims, “but, as I told my lord of Westmoreland, the *misordered time* doth, in common sense, *crowd* us and *crush* us into this monstrous form to *uphold our safety*!”

“I sent Your Grace the parcels and particulars of our grief, the which hath been *shoved* from the court with *scorn*!—whereupon this Hydra, son of War, is born—whose dangerous eyes may well be *charmed asleep* with grant of our most-just and right desires!

“Then true obedience, of this madness curèd, stoops tamely to the foot of majesty.”

Mowbray is irked by the final, conciliatory words. “If *not*,” he insists, “we ready are to try our fortunes to the last man!”

“And though *we* here fall down,” says Hastings, “we have supplies to *second* our attempt! If *they* miscarry, *theirs* shall second them—and so a *succession* of mischief shall be born, and heir from heir shall hold this quarrel up whiles England shall have generation!”

Lancaster dismisses that dire threat. “You are too shallow, Hastings, *much* too shallow, to sound the bottom of the after-times!”

Westmoreland sees that the rebels commanders’ ire is rising; he turns to the prince. “Pleaseth Your Grace to answer them directly how far forth you do like their *articles*.”

“I like them all, and do well *allow* them,” says John, “and swear here, by the honour of my blood, that my father’s purposes have been mistook, and some about him have too lavishly wrested his meaning and authority.

“My lord, these griefs shall be with speed *redressèd*,” he tells the archbishop. “Upon my soul, they *shall*!”

“If this may please you, discharge your powers unto their several counties, as we will ours. And here, between the armies, let’s *drink* together, friendly, and *embrace*, so that all their eyes may bear home those tokens of our restorèd love and amity!”

The bishop bows, highly pleased. “I take your princely word for these redresses!”

“As I *give* it you, I will maintain my *word*,” says Prince John, signaling to his attendants. Two men bring a small wooden table and a bottle of wine, set down four silver cups, and fill them. “And thereupon I drink unto Your Grace!”

Hastings turns to an officer. “Go, captain, and deliver to the army this news of *peace*! Let them have pay, and depart!—I know it will well please them! *Hie thee*, captain!” The officer bows and goes to the rebels’ forces.

The bishop, beaming, raises his cup. “To *you*, my noble lord of Westmoreland!”

“I pledge Your Grace,” says the earl, lifting his, and they drink. “And, if you knew what pains I have taken breeding this present peace, you would *drink deeply*! But my love to *ye* shall show itself more openly hereafter.”

“I do not doubt you!”

“I am glad of it. Health to my lord and gentle cousin, Mowbray.”

But Mowbray scowls. “You wish me health in very appropriate season, for I am, on the sudden, somewhat *ill*,” he says angrily.

“Despite ill chances, men are ever *merry*; heaviness but foreruns a *good event*!” the bishop tells him brightly.

Westmoreland raises his cup, watching Mowbray. “Therefore be merry, coz; since sullen sorrow serves to say thus: ‘Some *good* thing comes tomorrow.’”

“Believe me, *I* am surpassingly *light* in spirit!” says the archbishop happily.

“So much the worse,” mumbles Mowbray, “if your own rule be *true*.”

They hear cheering. Prince John looks toward the rebels’ disbanding army. “The word of peace is rendered! Hark how they shout!”

Mowbray glowers. “This had been cheerful after *victory*.”

“A *peace* is of the nature of a *conquest*,” says the archbishop, “for then *both* parties *nobly* are subdued, and neither party a loser!”

The prince turns to Westmoreland. “Go, my lord, and let *our* army be discharged, too.” The earl bows and strides away. “And, good my lord,” says John to the archbishop, “so please you, let your trains”—columns of troops—“march past us, that we may peruse the men we should have coped withal.”

“Go, good Lord Hastings, and, ere they be dismissed, let them march by,” says the archbishop. Hastings bows and goes.

Prince John sees the opposing generals’ relief as their armies are sent home. “I trust, lords, you shall lie here together tonight.” He asks, as Westmoreland returns, “Now, cousin, wherefore stands our army still?”

“The leaders, having charge from you to stand, will not go off until they hear *you* speak.”

The prince, hardly surprised, nods. “They know their duties.”

Hastings returns, smiling, to tell the archbishop there can be no review of his troops. “My lord, our army is *dispersed* already! Like youthful steers unyoked, they take their courses east, west, north, south; for, like a *school* broke up, each hurries toward his home and sporting-place!”

“*Good* tidings, my lord Hastings!” says Westmoreland, stepping forward. “On the which I do *arrest* thee, *traitor*, for *high treason*!”

“And *you*, lord archbishop, and *you*, Lord Mowbray, for *capitol treason* I attach you both!”

Mowbray is furious. “Is *this* proceeding just and *honourable*?” he demands, as royal soldiers surround and seize them.

“Is your *assembly* so?” asks Westmoreland angrily.

The silver cup falls from the bishop’s hand as he stares, aghast. “Will you thus break your *faith*?”

“I empawned *thee* none!” says John of Lancaster. “I promised you *redress* for these same grievances whereof you did complain—which, by mine honour, I will perform with a most *Christian* care!”

“But as for *you rebels*, look to taste the due meet for rebellion and such acts as yours!”

“Most *shallowly* did you these armies commence, *recklessly* brought them here, and *foolishly* sent them *hence*!”

“Strike up our drums!—*pursue the scattered strays*!” he tells Westmoreland. “*God*, but not *we*, hath safely fought today!”

John now regards the prisoners with open contempt. “Some guard these traitors to the block of *death*—*treason*’s true bed, and yielder-up of breath!”

## Chapter Nine Thoughts of Valor

The Yorkshire forest’s usual stillness is broken by unfamiliar noises, those of trumpets and drums, as military alarums summon soldiers, and by violent action, as fast-moving excursions from the king’s army overtake and fight with fleeing rebels.

With his tatterdemalion troops, Sir John Falstaff has at last reached the royal army. And now the paunchy captain stops a weary old gentleman in dented armor whom he finds staggering

southward. “What’s your *name*, sir? Of what condition are you, and of what place,”—rank, “I pray?” he demands, sword drawn and raised.

“I am a knight, sir, and my name is Colevile of the Dale.”

Falstaff glares. “Well, then, Colevile is your name, a knight is your degree—and your *place* the *dale*! Cole-*vile* shall be still your name, a *traitor* your degree, and the *dungeon* your place!—a place deep enough so shall you *always* be the cold and vile of the dale!”

“Are not you Sir John Falstaff?”

“As *good* a man as he, sir, whoe’er I am! Do ye *yield*, sir?—or shall I *sweat* for you? If I *do* sweat drops, they are the tears of those that love you, and they weep for thy *death*! Therefore rouse up *fear and trembling*, and do observance to my *mercy*!”

Colevile calmly sheathes his sword. “I think you *are* Sir John Falstaff, and in *that* thought yield me.” The big knight is well known for his addiction to comforts. The rebel unbuckles and drops his sword, and proffers his knife, haft forward.

Falstaff tucks the weapon under the wide belt encircling his waist. “I have a whole school of *tongues*”—beef, with mustard—“in this belly of mine, and not a tongue of them all speaks any other word but *my name*!” grumbles the big knight. “If I had but a belly of any *indifference*, I were simply the *most active* fellow in Europe!” he says, tired of trudging. He rubs his massive middle. “My womb, my *womb*—my womb *undoes* me!”

He sees a party of noblemen and some troops approaching. “Here comes our general.”

Prince John has been observing as the slower rebels were chased, to forestall their turning to attack. “The heat is past; follow no further now,” he tells the officers. “Call in the powers, good cousin Westmoreland.” The earl bows and goes to deliver the order.

John turns to the knight. “Now, Falstaff, where have you *been* all this while? When everything is ended, *then* you come! On my life, these tardy tricks of yours will one time or other break some gallows’ back!”

Says Falstaff, seeming disheartened, “I would be surprised, my lord, should it be but thus. I never knew yet but *rebuke* and *check* as the reward of valour.

“Do you think me a *swallow*, an *arrow*, or a *bullet*? Have I, in my poor and old motion, the expedition of *thought*?”

“I have *speeded* hither within the very extremest *inch of possibility*!—I have foundered nine score and odd *post-horses*!—and *here*, travel-tainted as I am, have in my pure and immaculate *valour*, taken *Sir John Colevile of the Dale*, a most furious knight and valorous *enemy*!”

“But what of that?” he says, affecting humility—briefly. “He saw *me*, and *yielded*—so I may justly say, with the hook-nosed fellow of Rome,” Julius Caesar, ““I came, saw, and *overcame*!””

Prince John glances at the unarmed knight. “It was more of *his courtesy* than your deserving.”

“I know not,” says Falstaff, pushing Colevile toward the prince’s men. “Here he is, and here I yield him! And I beseech Your Grace: let it be booked with the rest of this day’s deeds!—or else, by the Lord, I will have it printed in a particular *ballad*”—one based on an event—“with mine own picture on the top of’t, Colevile kissing my foot!”

His eyes narrow as he warns: “To which course if I be enforced, if *you* do not all show like *gilt two-pences*”—counterfeit coins—“compared to me, and *I* in the clear sky of fame do not o’ershine you as much as the full *moon* doth the *cinders* of the element”—stars, “which show like *pins*’ heads to her, believe not the word of the noble!

“Therefore let me have *right*!—and let *desert* mount!”

Lancaster regards him. “Thine’s too *heavy* to mount,” he says dryly.

“Let it *shine*, then!”

“Thine’s too *thick* to shine.”

“Let it do *something*, my good lord, that may do me *good*,” pleads Falstaff, “and call it what you will!”

The prince turns away. “Is thy name Colevile?”

“It is, my lord.”



“A famous *rebel* art thou, Colevile!”

“And a famous *true* subject *took* him!” insists Falstaff.

“I am, my lord, only as my betters are that led me hither,” says the captive. “Had they been ruled by *me*, you should have won them dearer than you have!” he adds angrily.

Falstaff scoffs. “I know not how *they* sold themselves, but *thou*, like a kind fellow, *gavest thyself away, gratis*—and I *thank* thee for *thee!*”

Lord Westmoreland returns. “Now, have you left pursuit?” asks the prince.

The nobleman nods. “Retreat is made, and execution stayed.”

“Send Colevile to York for present execution with his confederates,” orders the stern prince.

“Blunt, lead him hence; and see you guard him sure.” The soldiers follow Sir John Blunt, hauling Colevile away toward their other high-ranking prisoners.

The prince is eager to return to London. “And now dispatch we toward the court, my lords. I hear the king my father is sorely sick; our *news* shall go before us to his majesty—which, cousin, *you* shall bear to comfort him,” he tells Falstaff, “and we with *sober* speed will follow you.”

“My lord, I beseech you, give me leave to go through Gloucestershire,” says Falstaff, “and to stand, my good lord, I pray, in your good report when you come to court.”

Prince John and his men head toward their encampment to prepare for the march home. “Fare you well, Falstaff,” he says stiffly. “I, in my condition,”—at the palace, “shall better speak of you than you *deserve.*”

Falstaff watches him go. *I would you had but the wit! 'Twere better than your dukedom!*

*'Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me; a man cannot make him laugh!*

*But that's no marvel: he drinks no wine. There's never one of these demure boys comes to any proof,—who amounts to much, with a play on proof as proportion of alcohol—for thin drink doth over-cool their blood, and, taking many fish-meals,—instead of hearty red meat—they fall into a kind of male green-sickness!—menses. And then when they marry, they beget wenches!*

*They are generally fools and cowards!—which some of us should be, too, but for inflammation!—by wine, he admits.*

*A good sherry sack hath a two-fold operation in it. It ascends into the brain, dries there all the foolish and dull and curling vapours which environ it—makes it apprehending!—quick, festive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes!—which delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue—where is their birth—becomes excellent in wit!*

*The second property of your excellent sherry is the warming of the blood, which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale—which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice! But the sherry warms it, and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extreme! It illumineth the face, which as a beacon gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom's men to arm! And then the virtual commoners and petty inland spirits all muster to their captain, the heart!—who, great and puffed up with this retinue, dareth any deed of courage!*

*And this valour comes of sherry! Skill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that sets it a-work! And learning's a mere hoard of gold kept by a devil, till sack commences to set it into act and use!*

*Hereof comes it that Prince Harry is valiant; for the cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father he hath, like lean, sterile and bare land, manured, husbanded and tilled with excellent endeavour by drinking good—and a good store of—fertile sherry, so that he is become very hot and valiant!*

*If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be to forswear thin potations, and to addict themselves to sack!*

“How now Bardolph,” he says, as the corporal walks up, interrupting his reverie.

“The army is discharged all, and gone,” the man tells him; there will be no more commissions or bribes.

“Let them go,” says Falstaff. “I'll through Gloucestershire—and there will I visit Master

Robert Shallow, esquire! I have him already tempering between my finger and my thumb,”—softening, like red wax, “and shortly will I *seal* with him!”

The errant soldiers and their men will soon pause in the southwestern province, despite Prince John’s command to rush good news to the ailing king in London.

“Come, away!”

King Henry IV tells his court, meeting in a crowded chamber of the old monastery at Westminster Abbey, “Now, lords, if God doth give successful end to this debate that bleedeth at our doors, we will our youth lead on to *higher* fields, and draw no swords but what are sanctified!” He intends, once again, to visit the Holy Land; England is almost pacified, and a crusade would bring rewards.

“Our navy is addressèd, our power collected, our substitutes in absence well invested, and everything lies level to our wish!”

But Henry is pale and weak; he steadies himself with a hand on each arm of an oak chair as he slowly eases down. “We lack only a little personal strength, and pause us till these rebels, now afoot, come underneath the yoke of *government*.”

Lord Warwick assures him, “*Both* of which we doubt not but Your Majesty shall soon enjoy!”

Henry regards one of his four sons. “Humphrey, my son of Gloucester, where is the prince your brother?”

“I think he’s gone to hunt, my lord, at Windsor.”

“And how accompanied?”

“I do not know, my lord.”

“Is not his brother, Thomas of Clarence, with him?”

“No, my good lord; he is in presence here.”

Young Thomas comes forward. “What would my lord and father?”

“Nothing but well to thee, Thomas of Clarence,” says the king. “How chance thou art not with the prince thy brother? He loves thee, and thou dost neglect him!”

“Thomas, thou hast a better place in his affection than all thy brothers’. *Cherish* it, my boy, and thou mayst effect noble offices of *mediation* after I am dead, between his greatness and thine other brethren. Therefore *omit him not*: blunt not his love, nor lose the good advantage of his grace by seeming cold or careless of his will—for he is gracious, if he be observèd.

“He hath a tear for pity, and a hand open as day for a melting charity; that notwithstanding, being incensed he’s *flint*!”

“As mercurial as winter, and as sudden as flaws concealèd in a spring day, his temper, therefore, must be *well* observèd: chide him for faults, but do it *reverently*; when thou perceive his blood inclined to *mirth*—his mood like a *whale aground*—then give him line and scope, till his passions confound themselves with working.

“Learn *that*, Thomas, and thou shalt prove a shelter to thy friends, and a hoop of gold to bind thy brothers in, so *united* that the vessel of their blood—though mingled with venomous suggestion, as force perforce the age will pour it in—shall never leak, though ill do work as strong as *aconitum*”—a powerful poison—“or rash *gunpowder*!”

“I shall observe him with all care and love,” the young nobleman promises.

“Why art thou not at Windsor with him, Thomas?”

The brothers exchange glances. “He is not there today,” says Thomas. “He dines in London.”

“And how accompanied?” asks the king. “Canst thou tell that?”

“With Poins, and other of his continual followers.”

Henry is clearly perturbed. “Most subject is the *richest* soil to *weeds*!—and he, the noble image of *my* youth, is *overspread* with them! Therefore my grief stretches itself beyond the hour of death! The blood weeps from my heart when I do shape in forms imaginary the unguided days and rotten times that you shall look upon when I am sleeping with my ancestors!”

“For when his headstrong riot hath no *curb*, when *rage* and *hot blood* are his counsellors, when means and lavish manners meet together, *oh*, with what *wings* shall his affections fly from *confronting* perils, and toward opposèd *delay!*”

“My gracious lord, you look *beyond* him quite!” protests Lord Warwick. “The prince but *studies* his companions! As with a strange *tongue*, wherein to gain the language ’tis needful that the most *immodest* words be looked upon and learned—which once attained, Your Highness knows, come to no further use but to be known and *hated!*”

“So, like gross *terms*, the prince will, in the perfectness of time, *cast off* his followers, and their memory shall be as a *pattern*, or live as a *measure* by which his grace must weigh the lives of others—turning past *evils* into *advantages!*”

Henry is not convinced. “’Tis seldom when the bee doth leave her comb in *dead carrion.*” He sees a lord approaching. “Who’s here? Westmoreland?”

That nobleman bows. “Health to my sovereign, and *new* happiness added to that which I am to deliver!” He leans forward as a surrogate and gently lifts the feeble king’s hand. “*Prince John* your son doth kiss Your Grace’s hand!

“*Mowbray*, the *Bishop Scroop*, *Hastings* and *all* are brought to the correction of your law! There is not now a rebel’s sword unsheathèd; and *Peace* puts forth her olive everywhere!”

He offers the king a document. “The manner how this action hath been borne, here at more leisure may Your Highness read, with every course in its particular.”

Henry rises and reaches happily for the paper. “Oh, Westmoreland, thou art a *summer bird* which even in the haunch of winter sings the lifting up of day!” Another nobleman comes toward him. “Look, here’s more news....”

“From enemies may *heaven* keep Your Majesty!” says Lord Harcourt, bowing. “And, when they stand against you, may they fall as those that I am come to tell you of!

“The Earl *Northumberland* and Lord *Bancroft*, with a great power of English, and of Scots, are by the sheriff of Yorkshire *overthrown!*” He proffers a leather pouch. “The manner and true order of the fight, this packet, please it you, contains at large.”

Henry accepts the letters—but suddenly winces and staggers back, catching himself at the heavy chair. “But wherefore should these good news make me *sick?*” he moans, blinking. “Will Fortune never come with *both* hands full, but write her *fair* words ever in *foulest* letters? She either gives an appetite and no *food*—such are the poor, in health—or else a *feast*, and takes away the hunger—such are the *rich*, that have abundance but enjoy it not!

“I should *rejoice* now at this happy news; but now my sight fails, and my brain is giddy!

“*Oh, me!*” he gasps, falling back onto the seat. “Come near me!—now I am much ill!”

Prince Humphrey hurries to him. “*Comfort*, Your Majesty!”

“O my royal father!” cries Thomas, reaching the king’s side, and catching him as he sags and faints.

Westmoreland kneels. “My sovereign lord, cheer yourself! *Look up!*”

“Be patient, princes,” advises Warwick. “You do know these fits are with his highness very ordinary.” He motions them back. “Stand from him. Give him air; he’ll straight be well.”

Thomas is closest, hands supporting his father’s crowned head. “No, *no*, he cannot long hold back these pangs!” he says. “The incessant care and labour of his mind hath worn the wall that should confine it in so *thin* that *life* looks through, and will break out!”

Prince Humphrey frowns; the monarch’s illness is also politically problematic. “The *people* are my worry—for they do observe *unfathered heirs*, and *loathly births* in Nature when the *seasons* change their *manner*—as if the year had found some months *asleep*, and leaped them over!”

Thomas looks up at him, nodding. “The river hath thrice flowed with no *ebb* between,” he notes, of the Thames’ peculiar three days of continual rising, “and the *old* folk, time’s dotting chronicles, say it did so a little time before that when our great-grandsire, Edward,”—King Edward III, “sickened and died!”

“Speak lower, princes,” urges Warwick, “for the king recovers....”  
But Humphrey shakes his head sadly. “This apoplexy will certainly be his end.”  
The king stirs. “I pray you, take me up, and bear me hence into some other chamber.”  
Attendants lift the chair, carrying him in it, still clutching his news. “*Softly, pray,*” he groans.

## Chapter Ten Reconciliation

At the palace, King Henry IV lies in his bedchamber, attended by his sons and chief counselors. “Let there be no noise made, my gentle friends—unless some favourable hand will whisper dulcet music to my weary spirit....”

Lord Warwick motions to an attendant. He says, his voice hushed, “Call for the music in the other room.”

Henry is very pale. “Set me the crown upon my pillow here.”

Thomas watches as it is lifted, then laid beside his father’s head. “His eye is hollow, and he changes much,” he whispers.

As the eldest son arrives with attendants, Warwick cautions them, “Less noise, less *noise!*”

Prince Harry glances around. “Who saw the Duke of Clarence?”

“I am here, brother, full of heaviness,” says Thomas.

“How now? Rain *within* doors, and none abroad,” says Harry cheerfully, going to the bed. “How doth the king?”

Humphrey is worried. “Exceeding ill.”

“Heard he the good news yet?” asks Harry. “Tell it him!”

Gloucester nods. “He altered much upon the hearing it.”

“If he be sick with *joy*, he’ll recover without physic.”

“Not so much noise, my lords!” warns Warwick. “Sweet prince, speak low; the king your father is disposed to sleep.”

“Let us withdraw into the other room,” says Thomas.

Warwick follows him. He turns to ask Harry, “Will’t please Your Grace to go along with us?”

“No; I will sit and watch here by the king.” Warwick frowns, but he bows and goes with the others.

Harry pulls a chair to the bed.

*Why doth the crown lie there upon his pillow, being so troublesome a bedfellow? O polished perturbation—golden care!—that keep’st the ports of slumber open wide so many a watchful night!*

*Asleep with it now. Yet a sleep not so sound nor half so deeply sweet as his whose brow with homely nightcap is bound snores out the watch of night.*

*O majesty! When thou dost pinch thy bearer, thou dost sit like a rich armour worn in heat of day, that scalds with safety!*

He moves closer, alarmed. *Beside his gates of breath there lies a downy feather—which stirs not! If he did suspire, that light and weightless down perforce must move....*

“My gracious lord! My father!”

He touches Henry’s forehead; it is cold.

*This sleep is sound indeed; this is the sleep that from this golden round hath divorced so many English kings!*

He kneels. *Thy due from me is tears and heavy sorrows of the blood, which nature, love, and filial tenderness, shall, O dear Father, pay thee plenteously!*

*My due from thee is this imperial crown, which, as immediate to thy place and blood, derives itself to me. Lo, here it sits, which God shall guard!*

*And put the world's whole strength into one giant arm, it shall not force this lineal honour from me!*

He rises and takes up the crown, turning it slowly in his hands. *This from thee will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me.*

The king awakens. "Warwick! Gloucester! Clarence!"

The lords return, Thomas first. "Doth the king call?"

"What would Your Majesty?" asks Warwick. "How fares Your Grace?"

"Why did you leave me here alone, my lords?"

Thomas replies: "We left the prince my brother here, my liege, who undertook to sit and watch by you."

"The Prince of Wales! Where is he? Let me see him!" He peers around weakly. "He is not here."

Warwick looks toward the back of the room. "This door is open; he is gone this way."

Humphrey nods. "He came not through the chamber where we stayed."

"Where is the crown? Who took it from my pillow?"

"When we withdrew, my liege, we left it *here*," Warwick tells him.

"The prince hath ta'en it hence! Go, seek him out! Is he so hasty that he doth suppose my sleep my death?"

"*Find him*, my lord of Warwick!—chide him hither!" Warwick, his expression stern, bows and goes.

"This parting of his conjoins with my *disease*," moans Henry, "and helps to *end me*!"

"See, sons, what things you are!—how quickly Nature falls into revolt when *gold* becomes her object! For *this* the foolish, over-careful fathers have broken their sleep with thoughts, their brains with care, their bones with industry!—for *this* they have engrossed and piled up the cankered heaps of strange-achieved gold!—for *this* they have been thoughtful to invest their sons with arts and martial exercises!"

"When, like the bee, culling from every flower the virtuous *sweets*, our thighs packed with wax, our mouths with honey, we bring it to the hive, then like the bees are *murdered* for our pains!—this *bitter* yield is engrossment to the ending *father!*"

He sees Warwick returning. "Now where is he that will not stay so long as till his *friend*, *sickness*, hath determined me?"

The nobleman speaks softly. "My lord, I found the prince in the next room—wetting with kindly *tears* his gentle cheeks, with such a deep demeanor of great *sorrow* that *Tyranny*, which never quaffed but *blood*, would, beholding him, have washed its knife with gentle eye-drops!"

"He is coming hither."

"But wherefore did he take away the crown?"

"*Lo*, where he comes. Come hither to me, Harry." The king looks up at the others. "Depart the chamber; leave us here alone."

The nobles bow and go.

Prince Harry comes to his father's side, with the crown in his hand. "I never thought to hear you speak again," he says gently.

"Thy *wish*, Harry, was father to *that* thought!" complains the king. "I stay *too long* by thee, I *weary* thee! Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair that thou wilt needs invest thee with my honours before thine hour be ripe?"

"O foolish youth! Thou *seek'st* the greatness that will *o'erwhelm* thee! Stay but a little; for my cloud of dignity is held from falling with so weak a wind that it will quickly drop. My day is dim.

"Thou hast *stolen* that which after some few hours were thine without offence!—and at my death thou hast sealed up my *expectation*. Thy life did manifest thou lovedst me not, and thou wilt have me die *assured* of it!"

“Thou hidest a thousand *daggers* in thy thoughts, which thou hast whetted on thy stony heart, to stab at half an hour of my life! *What?*—canst thou not forbear me *half an hour?* Then get thee gone and *dig my grave thyself*, and bid the merry bells ring to thine ear that *thou art crownèd*, not that *I am dead!*”

“Let all the tears that should bedew my hearse be drops of balm to sanctify thy head! Merely compound *me* with *forgotten dust!*—give that which gave thee life unto the *worms!* Pluck down my officers, break my decrees!—for now a time is come to *mock at form!*”

With effort, he sits up in bed. “Harry the *Fifth* is *crownèd!* *Up*, vanity! *Down*, royal state! All you *sage* counsellors, *hence!*—and to the English court assemble now, from every region, *apes of idleness!*”

“Now, neighbour confines”—squalid parts of London—“purge you of your *scum!* Have you a *ruffian* that will swear, drink, dance, revel the night?—rob, murder, and commit the oldest sins the newest kind of ways? Be *happy!*—he will trouble *you* no more! England”—the new king—“shall *double-gild* his treble *guilt*; England shall give him *office, honour, might!*—for the *fifth* Harry from curbèd *licence* plucks the muzzle of restraint, and the *wild dog* shall flesh his tooth on every *innocent!*”

“O my poor *kingdom*, sick with civil blows! If *my* care could not withhold thy riots, what wilt thou do when riot *is* thy care? Oh, thou wilt be a *wilderness* again, peopled with *wolves*, thine old inhabitants!”

He sinks back, exhausted.

Prince Harry moves forward. “O my liege, *pardon* me!—but for my *tears*, the moist impediments unto my speech, I had forestalled this dear and deep rebuke ere you from grief had spoken, and I had heard the course of it so *far!*”

“There is your crown,” he says, placing it on the pillow, “and may He that wears the crown *immortally* long guard it *yours!*”

The prince kneels. “If I affect it more than as *your* honour and as *your* renown, let me no more from this obedience rise, while my most inward, true, and duteous *spirit* teacheth this prostrate and exterior *bending!*”

“God witness with me, when I here came in and found no course of breath within Your Majesty, how *cold* it struck my heart! If I do *feign*, oh let me in my present wildness *die*, and never live to show the incredulous world the noble change that I have purposed!

“Coming to look on you, thinking you *dead*—and dead almost, my liege, to think you were!—I *spake* unto this crown as having *sense*, and thus *upbraided* it: ‘The *care* on thee depending hath *fed* upon the body of my father!—therefore thou, best of gold, art *worst* of gold! Other, less fine in carat, is more precious, preserving *life* in medicine potable; but *thou*, most fine, most honoured, most renowned, hast *eaten up* thy bearer!’”

“Thus *accusing* it, my most royal liege, I put it on my head to *contend* with it as with an *enemy* that had, before my face, *murdered my father!*—the quarrel of a *true* inheritor!

“But if it did infect my blood with *joy*, or swell my thoughts to any strain of *pride*—if any rebel or vain spirit of mine did with the least affection of a *welcome* give entertainment to the might of it—let God forever keep it from my head, and make me as the poorest vassal is that doth with awe and terror *kneel* to it!”

The king has tears in his eyes. “O my son, *God* put it in thy mind to take it hence, that thou mightst win the *more* thy father’s *love*, pleading so wisely in excuse of it!

“Come hither, Harry; sit thou by my bed; and hear, I think, the very last counsel that ever I shall breathe.” Harry moves to the chair and sits beside him.

“*God* knows, my son, by what by-paths and indirect, crooked ways I met this crown; and I myself know well how *troublesome* it sat upon my head! To thee it shall descend with better *quiet*, better *opinion*, better *confirmation*; for all the soil of the achievement goes with me into the earth.

“It seemed in *me* but as an honour *snatchèd* with boisterous hand; and I had many living

*upbraiding* my gain of it by their assistances—which daily *grew*, to quarrel, then to *bloodshed*, wounding supposed peace! All these bold peers, thou see'st, with *peril* I have *answerèd!*—for all my reign hath been but as a scene acting that argument!

“And now my death changes the mode, for what in me was *purchased* falls upon thee in a more fairer sort, as thou the garland wear'st *successively*.

“Yet, though thou stand'st more sure than I could do, thou art not firm *enough*, since griefs are green, and all my *friends*—by whose fell working I was first *advancèd*, and whom thou must make *thy* friends—have but had their *stings* and *teeth* newly ta'en out, by whose power *I* might well *again* have lodged in fear of being displaced!

“Which to avoid, I *cut some off*, and had the purpose now to lead many out to the Holy Land, lest rest and lying still might make them look too near unto my *state!*

“Therefore, my Harry, be it thy course to busy giddy minds with *foreign* quarrels, so that action *hence* borne out may waste the memory of the former days.”

He coughs—painfully, flushing with the strain. “*More* would I, but my lungs are so wasted that strength of speech is utterly denied me.

“How I came by the crown, *oh*, may *God forgive!*—and grant it may with thee in *true peace* live!”

“My gracious liege, you *won* it, *wore* it, *kept* it!—gave it *me!* Then plain and right must my possession be! Which I with more than the common claim 'gainst all the world will right fully *maintain!*”

King Henry IV smiles. He sees the door open. “Look, look, here comes my John of Lancaster.”

“Health, peace, and happiness to my royal father!” says John, coming to him.

“Thou *bring'st* me happiness and peace, son John; but *health*, alack, with youthful wings is flown from this bare-withered trunk. Upon thy sight, my worldly business makes a period.

“Where is my lord of Warwick?”

Prince Harry calls: “My lord of Warwick!”

The counselor returns.

“Doth any particular lodging name belong unto the room where I first did swoon?” the king asks his closest advisor.

“'Tis called 'Jerusalem,' my noble lord.”

King Henry nods and smiles. “Laud be to God!

“Even there my life must end. It hath been prophesied to me many years ago: I should not die but in *Jerusalem*—which vainly I supposed the Holy Land!

“But bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie.

“In that Jerusalem shall Harry die.”

## Chapter Eleven Judgment by Justice

Shallow insists that the guests in his house stay longer. “By cock-'n-pie, sir, you shall not away tonight!” He calls: “*What!*—*Davy*, I say!”

Falstaff seems to resist the offer of supper, even as fine a one as has been proposed. “You must excuse me, Master Robert Shallow...”

“I will *not* excuse you; you shall not be excused; excuses shall not be *admitted*; there is no excuse shall serve!—you shall not be *excusèd!*

“*Why*, Davy?”

The sprightly steward pops into the parlor. “Here, sir!”

“Davy, Davy, Davy, Davy, let me see, Davy...” Shallow is thinking, “Let me see, Davy; let me see... Yea, marry, *William*—*cook!*—bid him come hither!” The man goes out. “Sir John, you

shall *not* be excused!”

Davy returns with word from William. “Marry, sir, thus: *those* recipes cannot be served. And, *again*, sir: shall we sow the headland with wheat?”

Shallow frowns. “With red wheat, Davy. But as for William the cook: are there *no* young pigeons?”

“Yes, sir,” says the steward, handing Shallow a bill. “Here now is the smith’s note for shoeing and plough-irons.”

“Let it be cast and paid. Sir John, you shall not be excused!”

The rustic household’s *major domo* continues. “Now, sir, a new link to the bucket must need be had. And, sir, do you mean to stop any of William’s wages, over the sack he lost the other day at Hinckley Fair?”

“He shall answer it,” says Shallow firmly, walking Davy to the door. “*Some* pigeons, Davy, a couple of short-legged hens, a joint of mutton, and any pretty little *tine-kickshaws*,”—*quelque chose*, prong somethings, “tell William cook!”

At the door, Davy asks, privately “Doth the man of war stay all night, sir?”

“Yea, Davy; I will use him *well*! A friend i’ the *court* is better than a penny in *purse*!” Falstaff’s troops are camped outside. “Use his men well, Davy—for they are *arrant knaves*, and will backbite!”

The steward grins. “No worse than they are *backbitten*, sir, for they have marvellous-foul *linen*!”—clothing infested with lice.

Shallow laughs. “Well *conceited*, Davy! About thy business, Davy.”

But the Gloucestershire man has a boon to request from the justice of the peace. “I beseech you, sir, to countenance William Visor of Woncot against Clement Perkes of the hill.”

Shallow frowns. “There is *many* complaints, Davy, against that Visor! That Visor is an *arrant knave*, on my knowledge!”

“I grant Your Worship that he is a knave, sir; yet God forbid, sir, but that a knave should have some countenance at his *friend’s* request,” Davy argues. “An *honest* man, sir, is able to speak for *himself*, when a knave is not.

“I have served Your Worship truly, sir, this *eight years*, and if I cannot once or twice in a quarter bear out a knave against an honest man, I have but a very little credit with Your Worship! The knave is mine honest friend, sir; therefore, I beseech Your Worship, let him be countenanced.”

The old justice accedes—sort of. “Go to; I say he shall have no *wrong*. Look about, Davy.”

The steward, satisfied, goes to the cook, and Shallow turns back to his guests. “Where are you, Sir John? Come, come, come, off with your boots!” He goes to the corporal. “Give me your hand, Master Bardolph!”

“I am glad to see Your Worship!” says the red-faced man, as they shake hands.

“I thank thee with all my heart, kind Master Bardolph!”

“And *welcome*, my tall fellow,” Shallow tells the diminutive page. “Come, Sir John,” he says, heading toward the kitchen.

“I’ll follow you, good Master Robert Shallow,” says Falstaff. “Bardolph, look to our horses.” With the boy, the corporal goes out to the camp; the troops, too, will eat meager dry rations.

Falstaff considers the prosperous proprietor of this sprawling country manse. *If I were sawed into quantities, I should make four dozen such staves as Master Shallow: bearded hermits!*

*It is a wonderful thing to see the semblable coherence of his men’s spirits and his! They, by observing of him, do bear themselves like foolish justices; he, by conversing with them, is turned into a justice-like serving-man! Their spirits are so married in conjunction with participation in this society that they flock together by consent like so many wild geese!*

*If I had a request for Master Shallow, I would humour his men with the imputation of being near to their master; if for his men, I would so curry with Master Shallow that no man could better command his servants!*



*It is certain that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught as men take diseases one from another! Therefore let men take heed of their company!*

The prince, he assumes, is heedless of the company he keeps. *I will devise matter enough out of this Shallow to keep Harry in continual laughter for the wearing out of six fashions, which is four terms, or two actions—a year of judicial sessions, or two suits at law—and 'a shall laugh without intervallums!—recesses.*

*Oh, it is much that a lie with a slight oath, and a jest with a sad brow, will do with a fellow that never had the ache in his shoulders!* he thinks, of the prince. *Ah, we shall see him laugh till his face be like a wet cloak ill laid up!*

“Sir John!” calls Shallow.

“I come, Master Shallow, *I come, Master Shallow!*”

**I**n a corridor of the palace at Westminster, Lord Warwick encounters an arriving visitor.  
“How now, my lord chief justice! Whither away?”

“How doth the king?”

Says Warwick gravely, “Exceeding well. His cares are now all ended.”

“I hope not *dead!*”

“He’s walked the way of Nature,” the earl reports, “and to *our* purposes he lives no more.”

“I would his majesty had called me *with* him!” groans Sir William. “The service that I *did truly* in his life hath left me all open to injuries!”

Warwick nods. “Indeed, I think the young king loves you not.”

“I *know* he doth not, and do arm myself to welcome the condition of the time, which cannot look more hideously upon me than I have drawn it in my fantasy!”

“Here come the sorrowing issue of dead Harry,” says Warwick, as three of the late king’s sons approach, with Lord Westmoreland and others. “Oh, that the *living* Harry, the worst of those gentlemen, had the temper of *him!* How many nobles then should hold their places, who must strike sail to sprits of *vile* sort!”—yield place to common criminals.

“Oh, God, I fear all will be overturned!” says the chief justice, anticipating the new king’s likely elevation of low men to noble station, and their appointment to high positions in government.

“Good morrow, cousin Warwick, good morrow,” says John sadly.

“Good morrow, cousin,” replies Warwick quietly.

John sighs. “We meet like men that had forgot how to *speak.*”

“We do remember,” says Warwick, “but our argument is all too heavy to admit much talk.”

“Well, peace be with him that hath made us heavy,” says John, of his father.

“Peace be with *us*, lest we be heavier!”—burdened with new griefs, says the chief justice.

Humphrey understands his concern. “Oh, good my lord, you have lost a friend indeed! And I dare swear you *borrow* not that face of seeming sorrow—it is surely your *own.*”

John concurs. “Though *no* man be assured what grace to find, *you* stand in coldest expectation! I am the sorrier—I would ’twere otherwise.”

“Well, you must now speak Sir John Falstaff *fair*, which swims against your stream of quality,” says Humphrey.

But the chief justice shakes his head. “Sweet princes, what I did, I did in *honour*, led by the impartial conduct of my soul! And never shall you see that *I* will beg a ragged—and forestallèd—*remission!*”

“If truth and upright innocence fail me, I’ll go to the king my master that is dead, and tell him who hath sent me after him!”

“Here comes the prince,” says Warwick, as King Henry V arrives with his attendants.

The lord chief justice bows. “Good morrow; and God save Your Majesty.”

The monarch tells the judge, “This new and gorgeous garment *majesty* sits not so easy on me as you think.” He regards the princes and smiles. “Brothers, you mix your sadness with some

*fear*; but this is the *English*, not the Turkish court; not *Amurath* an Amurath succeeds,”—a new tyrant taking the place of an old, “but Harry, *Harry!*”

“Yet *be* sad, good brothers, for, by my faith, it very well becomes you. Sorrow so royally in you appears that I will *deeply* put thy fashion on, and wear it in my *heart*. We’ll then be sad, good brothers; but entertain no more of it than a *joint* burden laid upon *us all*.

“As for me, by heaven I bid you be assured I’ll be your father *and* your brother too! Let me but bear your love, and I’ll bear your cares! Yet weep that Harry’s dead, and so will I; but Harry lives that shall *convert* those tears, by number, into *hours of happiness*.”

The princes return his smile—weakly. “We hope no other from Your Majesty,” says Thomas.

“You all look strangely on me,” says the king, “and *you* most!” he tells the chief justice. “You are, I think, assured I love you not....”

“I am assured, if I be measured *rightly*, that Your Majesty hath no just *cause* to hate me.”

“No? How might a *prince of my* great hopes forget so great indignities as *you* laid upon me? *What?*—berate, rebuke, and roughly send to *prison* the immediate heir of England! Was this *easy*? May this be washed in Lethe and *forgotten*?”

The judge speaks firmly. “I then did use the person of your *father*: the image of *his* power lay then in me. And, in the administration of his law, whiles I was busy for the commonwealth, Your Highness pleasèd to forget my place—the majesty and power of *law* and *justice*, the image of the *king* whom I represented—and struck me in my very hall of judgment. Whereupon I gave bold way to my authority and did commit you—as an offender to your *father*.

“If a deed were ill, would *you* be contented, wearing now the garland, to have a son set *your* decrees at nought, pluck down justice from *your* awesome bench, trip the course of *law*, and blunt the sword that guards *the peace and safety of your person?*—nay, *more*: spurn at your most royal *image*, and *mock* your workings in a second’s body!

“Question your royal thoughts; make the case *yours*—be now a *father* and propose a *son*—hear your own dignity so much *profaned*, see your most majestic laws so loosely *slighted*, behold yourself so by a son *disdainèd*! And then imagine me taking *your* part, and in your power softly silencing your son.

“After that cold consideration, sentence me; and, as you are a *king*, speak in your *state*”—pronounce officially—“what I have done that *misbecame* my place, my person, or my liege’s sovereignty.”

Says the new king without hesitation, “You are *right*, justice, and you weigh this well. Therefore still bear the balance and the sword”—the emblems of justice.

Henry V smiles. “And I do wish your honours may *increase*, till you do live to *see* a son of mine offend you—then *obey* you, as *I* did! So shall I live to speak my *father’s* words: ‘Happy am I that have a man so bold, who dares do *justice* on my proper son!’

“And I, having such a son, no less happily would so deliver up his greatness into the hands of justice. You did commit me—for which I do commit into your hand the unstainèd sword that you have used to bear—with this remembrance: that you use the same with the like *bold, just* and *impartial* spirit as you have done ’gainst me.

“There is my hand,” he says, gently taking that of the astonished judge. “You shall be as a father to my youth. *My* voice shall sound as *you* do prompt mine ear, and I will stoop, and humble my intents to your well-practised, wise direction.

“And, princes all, *believe* me, I beseech you, my father is gone mildly into his grave: for in his tomb lie my affections with his spirit; and *solemnly* I survive to mock the expectation of the world, to frustrate prophecies, and to raze out rotten opinion, which hath writ me down after my *seeming*.

“The tide of blood in me hath proudly flowed in vain pursuits till now; *now* doth it turn and ebb back to the *sea*, where it shall mingle with the source of floods, and flow henceforth in formal majesty!

“Now call we our high court of *Parliament!* And let us choose such limbs of *noble counsel*

that the great body of our state may go in equal rank with the *best-governed Nation!*” He looks upward. “So that war or peace, *or both at once*, may be as things *acquainted* and familiar to *us*, in which *you*, Father, shall have foremost hand!”

He regards the noblemen. “Our coronation done, we will accite as *before*-membered all our state”—agencies of governance.

“And, *God* cosigning to *my* good intents, no prince nor peer shall have just cause to say, ‘*God* shorten Harry’s happy life’—by even one *day!*”

Walking toward fragrant apple trees this golden summer evening, Justice Shallow proudly leads his well fed supper guests. “Nay, you shall see my *orchard*—where in an arbour we will eat a last-year’s pippin of my own grafting, with a platter of seedy cakes! And so, *forth!*—come, cousin Silence! And then to bed.”

“Fore God, you have here a goodly dwelling, and a rich!” puffs Falstaff, packed nearly full.

“*Barren*, barren, barren; *beggars* all, *beggars* all, Sir John,” claims Shallow humbly. He takes a deep breath. “Marry, good air!” He hails the steward and motions toward the rough table already laid with waiting wooden trenchers. “Spread, Davy; *spread*, Davy!” He watches, pleased, as the man pulls napkin-wrapped biscuits and a crock from a big wicker basket, and uncovers the dish of sliced apples. “Well *said*, Davy!” he beams, as the sugared fruit is spooned out.

“This Davy serves you for good uses,” observes Falstaff. “He is your husbandman and your *servant*.”

Shallow nods. “A *good* varlet, a good varlet, a *very* good varlet, Sir John!” He belches. “By the mass, I have drunk too much *sack* at supper! A *good* varlet... Now sit down, now sit down! Come, cousin...”

Justice Silence has drunk a full share as well. He sings: “‘*Ah, sirrah!*’ *quoth-*’a, ‘*we’ll nothing but eat and make good cheer, And praise God for the merry year, When meat is cheap and females dear, And lusty lads roam there and here, So merrily, and ever anon so merrily!*’”

“There’s a *merry* heart!” laughs Falstaff. “Good Master Silence, I’ll give you a *health* for that ‘anon!’”

“Give Master Bardolph some wine, Davy!” says the host.

“Sweet sir, *sit*,” Davy replies, still serving up apples. “*Sit* most sweet sir! I’ll be with you *anon!*”

“Master Page, good Master Page, you *prophecy*,” chuckles Falstaff, taking a seat, “what *you* lack in *meat*, *we’ll* have in *drink!* You must but *bear it!* The *heart* is all!” he cries. The boy makes a face, but he pours more wine from a flagon.

“Be *merry*, Master Bardolph!” urges Shallow. “And, my little *soldier* there, be merry!” he tells Falstaff’s boy.

Silence sings: “‘*Be merry, be merry, my wife has ale! Though women are shrews, both short and tall, ’Tis merry in hall when beards wag, all, And welcome Shrove-tide tale! Be merry, be merry!*’”

Falstaff laughs, surprised. “I did not think Master Silence had been a man of this mettle!”

“Who, *I?*” says Silence. “I have been merry twice and once ere now!”

Davy returns to set a heavy tray on the long table. “There’s a dish of leather-coats for you!” he tells Bardolph; the baked apples are succulent inside.

“*Davy!*” cries Shallow.

“I’ll be *with you straight*, Your Worship!” Davy asks Bardolph, “A cup of *wine*, sir?”

“‘*A cup of wine!*—that’s *brisk and fine!*’” sings Silence, “‘*And drink unto the leman mine!*’”—his sweetheart. He blinks. “‘*And a merry heart lives long-a!*’”

Falstaff quaffs deeply. “Well *said*, Master Silence!”

Silence sighs, enjoying the radiant sunset. “And so we *shall* be merry, now comes in the sweet o’ the night!”

Falstaff raises his mug. “Health and long life to you, Master Silence!”

Silence tells Davy, singing. “*Fill the cup— and let it come, I’ll pledge you, a mile to the bottom!*”

“Honest Bardolph, well come!” laughs Shallow, as the man sits down. “If thou wantest anything and wilt not *call, beshrew* thy heart! *Welcome*, my little, tiny thief,” he tells the page, “and *well come in deed*, too! I’ll drink to Master Bardolph, and to *all the cavaleros* about London!”

Davy is wistful. “*I hope to see London once, ere I die.*”

“And I that I might *see* you there, Davy!” says Bardolph.

“By the Mass, you’ll crack a quart together, *eh?*” laughs Shallow. “Will you *not*, Master Bardolph?”

“Yea, sir—and a *pottle-pot!*”—which holds *two* quarts.

“By God’s liggers, I *thank* thee!” cries Shallow. “The knave will *stick by thee*, I can assure thee that!” he tells the corporal. “A will not *out*; he is *true bred!*”

“And I’ll stick by *him*, sir!” says Davy wryly.

“Why, there spoke a *king!* Lack *nothing!* Be *merry!*” Shallow hears a distant rapping. “Look who’s at door there, *ho!* Who *knocks?*”

Davy goes to see.

“Why, *now* you have done me right!” cries Falstaff, as Silence finishes off a bumper to meet the knight’s challenge.

Silence sings, “Do me right, And *dub* me knight, *am-eeego!* Is’t not *so?*”

“’Tis *so!*” cries Falstaff.

“*Is’t* so?” laughs Silence. “Well, then, say an old man *can do something!*”

Davy returns to Shallow from the house. “An’t please Your Worship, there’s one *Pistol* come from the court with news....”

“From the *court!*” cries Falstaff. “Let him *come in!*”

Davy goes back, and soon Pistol, dusty after his ride, joins the drinkers.

“How now, Pistol?” demands the knight.

“Sir John, God save you!”

“What wind blew you hither, Pistol?” asks Falstaff.

Pistol grins. “Not the *ill* wind which blows no man to *good!*”—flatulence. “Sweet knight, thou art *now* one of the *greatest* men in this *realm!*” He helps himself to a mug of wine, and drinks deeply before explaining.

Says Silence, waiting to hear, “By’r lady, I think ’a be but Goodman *Puff* of Barson!”

“*Puff?*” cries the rider, wiping his mouth with the back of a hand. “*Puff in thy teeth*, most recreant coward, base!

“Sir John, I am thy Pistol and thy friend, and *helter-skelter* have I rode to thee!—and *tidings* do I bring!—of *lucky* joys and *golden* times, and *happy news of price!*”

Falstaff stares at the dubious herald-angel. “I pray thee now, *deliver* them like a *man* of this world!”

Pistol scoffs: “A *foutre* for the world and worldlings base!—I speak of *Africa*, and *golden* toys!”

Falstaff is impatient: “O base Assyrian knight, what is thy *news?* Let King Cophetua”—he of the ballad—“know the truth thereof!”

“*And Robin Hood, Scarlet, and John!*” sings Silence.

Pistol is annoyed. “Shall dunghill *curs* confront the *Helicons?* And shall good news be *baffled?*”—turned upside down. “Then, Pistol, lay thy head in the Fury’s lap!”—Atropos, the one who cuts the thread of life.

Silence stares at him, blinking. “Honest gentleman, I know not your meaning....”

“Why then, *lament* therefore!” cries Pistol, and he drinks again.

“Give me pardon, sir!” says Justice Shallow, tipsily stepping forward with exaggerated dignity. “If, sir, you come with news from the court, I take it there’s but two ways: either to *utter*

them, or to *conceal* them. I am, sir, under the king, in some *authority*....”

“Under which *king*, Besonian?” demands fiery Pistol. “Speak or die!”

“Under King Harry.”

Pistol peers. “Harry the Fourth? Or *Fifth*?”

“Harry the Fourth.”

“A *foutre* for thine office!” roars Pistol. “Sir John, thy tender *lambkin* now is *king*!—Harry the *Fifth*’s the man! I speak the truth! When Pistol lies, do *this*”—he makes a rude gesture, thumb between two fingers—“and *fig* me like a *bragging Spaniard*!”

“What, is the old king *dead*?” demands Falstaff.

“As nail in door! The things I speak are just!”

Falstaff rises quickly. “*Away*, Bardolph! *Saddle my horse*!”

“Master Robert Shallow, choose what office thou wilt in the land, ’tis *thine*!”

“*Pistol*, I will *double-charge* thee”—as with gunpowder—“with *dignities*!”

“Oh, *joyful* day!” cries Bardolph. “I would not take a *knighthood* for my fortune!”

“*What*? I do bring *good* news!” replies Pistol, dismissing such modest ambition.

Falstaff sees that a companion is asleep. “Carry Master Silence to bed,” he advises Davy.

“Master Shallow—*my Lord* Shallow—be what thou wilt!—I am Fortune’s *steward*! Get on thy boots! We’ll ride all night!

“*On*, sweet *Pistol*! *Away*, Bardolph!” The corporal goes toward the horses. “Come, Pistol, utter *more* to me—and withal devise something to do *thyself* good!

“*Boot, boot*, Master Shallow! I know the young king is *sick* for me!

“Let us take *any* man’s horses!—the laws of England are at my commandment! Blessed are they that have been my friends!—and *woe to my lord chief justice*!”

Pistol, who has vowed vengeance on many a sheriff’s man, nods. “Let vultures vile seize on *his* lungs also!” He sings: “*Where is the life that late I led*?” say they. Why, *here* it is!

“Welcome these *pleasant* days!”

## Chapter Twelve Newly Sovereign

Mistress Quickly protests loudly, as two of the blue-coated parish officers who administer punishment pull her and Doll Tearsheet along a drab street in London: “*No*, thou arrant *knave*! I would to God that I might *die*—so that I might *get thee hanged*! Thou hast drawn my shoulder out of joint!”

The wiry beadle tells his younger deputy, “The constables have delivered her over to *me*, and she shall have *whipping* soon enough, I warrant her! There hath been a man or two lately killed about her!”—victims of advanced venereal illness.

“Nut-hook, nut-hook, you *lie*!” cries Doll, struggling indignantly. “Come on, *I’ll* tell thee *what*, thou *damnèd*, tripe-visaged *rascal*: if the child I now go with do *miscarry*, thou wert better thou hadst *stuck thy mother*, thou paper-faced *villain*!” A woman who is pregnant can escape or delay being whipped.

Mistress Quickly regards her younger friend sadly. “Oh, would the Lord that *Sir John* were come!” she moans. “He’d make this a bloody day for *somebody*!”

The cynical beadle tells the madam, “But *I* pray God the fruit of her womb *does* miscarry! If it do *not*, you shall again have a dozen *cushions*!”—for men to lie on. “You have but *eleven* now!”

He regards the women angrily. “Come, I charge you both go with me—for the man is *dead* that you and Pistol beat amongst you!”

“I’ll tell you what, you face-on-a-censer, I will have you soundly *swinged* for this!—you *blue-bottle rogue*, you filthy, famished *correctioner*!” shouts Doll. “If you be not swung I’ll

forswear half-kirtles!”—skirts.

The beadle tugs at Mistress Quickly’s plump arm. “Come, come, you *she*-knight errant,”—one who makes trysts, “come!”

“Oh, God, that right should thus overcome *night!*” she groans. “Well, of sufferance comes ease,” she says, in half-hearted resignation.

“Come, you rogue, *come,*” Doll demands of the beadle, “bring me to a justice!”

“Aye, *come,* you starvèd blood-hound!” cries her companion.

Doll scowls at the man. “Goodman *Death,* Goodman *Bones!*”

“Thou *skeleton,* thou!” adds her friend.

“Come, you *thin thing!*”—puny penis, “*come,* you rascal!” cries Doll, as she is pulled along.

“Very well!” He smiles, already breathing more heavily as they approach the jail; the lonely man enjoys his work.

Near Westminster Abbey, the pavement has been swept unusually clean, and two grooms are strewing freshly cut long-grasses on the street, which is already milling with people eager for a glimpse of the new king.

“More rushes, more rushes!” cries the smaller worker.

The other nods, pulling a sheaf from the wagon as they hurry with preparations. “The trumpets have sounded twice!”

“’Twill be two o’clock ere they come from the coronation. Dispatch, *dispatch!*” They finish here and move steadily away among the still-swelling crowds.

Sir John Falstaff has finally reached London, and with him are Justice Shallow, Corporal Bardolph, and the young page. Their horses have been left at a fashionable inn near the Royal Exchange.

“Stand here by *me,* Master Robert Shallow,” says the big knight, shoving his way through a throng to stand at the front, facing the street. “I will make the king do you grace! I will leer upon him as ’a comes by—and do but mark the *countenance* that he will give *me!*”

Having heard Falstaff over the noise, his ensign, who has been trying to find him, pushes forward. “*God bless thy lungs,* good knight!” He has heard some news.

“Come here, Pistol; stand behind me!” commands Falstaff, positioning himself and the others to face along the route of the new monarch’s procession. He turns to Shallow. “Oh, if I had had *time* to have made new liveries I would have bestowed the thousand pound I borrowed of you! But ’tis no matter: *this* poor show doth better—this doth imply the *zeal* I had to see him!”

“It doth so,” says Shallow.

“It shows my *earnestness* of affection!”

“It doth so.”

“My *devotion*—”

“It doth, it doth, it doth!”

“—as it were, to ride *day and night,* and not to deliberate, not to remember, not to have patience shifting for *me,*—”

Shallow nods. “It is *best,* certain!”

“—but to stand, stained with *travel,* and sweating with desire to *see* him!—thinking of nothing else, putting all affairs else in *oblivion,* as if there were nothing else to be done but to *see* him!”

Mutters Pistol, “’Tis *semper idem,*”—always the same, “for *obsequi hoc nihil est!*” He means *absque hoc nihil est,* there’s nothing else. “’Tis all in every *part!*”

“’Tis so, indeed,” says Shallow.

“*My knight!*” cries Pistol insistently, “I will *inflame* thy noble *liver,* and make thee *rage!*”

“Thy *Doll*—the *Helen* of thy noble thoughts—is in base *durance* and contagious *prison!*—haled thither by most mechanical and dirty hands!

“Rouse up *Revenge* from ebon den for fell *Alecto*’s sake!”—she is another of the three Furies,

“for Doll is *in!* Pistol speaks nought but truth!”

Falstaff, still watching the street, motions for silence. “I will deliver her.”

They can hear, from down the way toward the church, loud cries of public approval, and horns heralding the arrival of King Henry V.

“There roared the sea, and trumpet-clangor sounds!” pronounces Pistol.

Behind a contingent of soldiers, some of whom move ahead to clear a path, King Henry and his royal train lead noble lords of the court toward the intersection and its cheering citizens.

“God save Thy Grace, *King Hal!*” shouts Falstaff over the clamor of approval. “My *royal Hal!*”

“The heavens guard and keep thee, most royal imp of fame!” cries Pistol.

“God *save* thee, my sweet boy!” bellows Falstaff.

The king turns to the nobleman walking beside him. “My lord chief justice, speak to that vain man.”

The judge moves toward Falstaff, frowning. “Have you your *wits?* Know you what ’tis you *speak?*”

“My *king!* My *Jove!*” cries Falstaff. “I speak to *thee*, my *heart!*”

The king regards him sternly. “I know thee not, old man! Fall to thy *prayers!* How *ill* white hairs become a fool and jester!

“I have long *imagined* such a kind of man—so surfeit-swellèd, so old and so profane; but, being *awaked*, I do *despise* my dream! Henceforth make *less* thy *body* and *more* thy *grace*; leave gormandizing!—know the *grave* doth gape for thee *thrice wider* than for other men!”

He raises a warning hand. “Reply not to *me* with a fool-born *jest!* Presume not that I am the thing I *was!* For *God* doth know—soon shall the *world* perceive—that I have turned away from my former self; so will I from those that kept me company.

“When thou dost hear I am as I *have* been, approach me and thou shalt be as *thou* wast, the tutor and the feeder of my riots. Till then I *banish* thee, on pain of death, as I have done the rest of my misleaders, not to come near our person by *ten miles!*”

“As for competence of life, I will allow it you, so that lack of means *enforce* you not to evil.”

He looks at Pistol too. “And, as we hear that you do *reform* yourselves, we will, according to your strengths and qualities, give you advancement.”

Henry nods to the chief justice. “Be it your charge, my lord, to see performèd the tenor of our word.” He motions to the military guard. “Set on.” The king and his stately train proceed to greet the other jubilating citizens of the capital.

Falstaff watches as the procession leaves them behind. “Master Shallow,” he begins, “I owe you a thousand pound....”

The country justice is clearly alarmed. “*Yea, marry*, Sir John!—which I beseech you to let me have *home* with me!”

The big knight smiles. “*That* can hardly be, Master Shallow. Do not you grieve at this!—I shall be sent for in *private* to him!

“Look you, he must *seem* thus to the world! Fear not your advancements; I will be the man *yet* that shall make you *great!*”

Shallow frowns. “I cannot well perceive *how*—unless you should give me *your* doublet, and *stuff* me out with *straw!* I beseech you, good Sir John, let me have *five hundred* of my thousand!”

“Sir, I will be as good as my word,” Falstaff assures him—oblivious to the irony. “This that you heard was but a *colour!*”—an affectation.

Shallow shakes his head ruefully. “A *colour* that I fear you will die in, Sir John!”—a play on dye.

“Fear *no* colours!”—a martial cry concerning flags, the erstwhile soldier tells him boldly.

“Go with me to dinner! Come, Lieutenant Pistol! Come, Bardolph!”

“I shall be sent for soon, at *night*,” he insists confidently.

Along with the lord chief justice, Prince John and several men of the royal guard return to

them. “Go, carry Sir John Falstaff to the Fleet,” the judge tells the officers. “Take all his company along with him.”

Falstaff protests: “My lord, my lord!—”

“I cannot speak now. I will hear you soon,” says the chief justice. “Take them away,” he orders.

“*Si Fortune me tormenta, sorrow contenta,*” shrugs Pistol, as Falstaff and his tavern companions are led down the street to the prison where Hal had once been held briefly.

Prince John and the chief justice watch as the crowds disperse.

“I like this fair proceeding of the king’s,” says John. “He hath intent that his wonted followers shall all be very well provided for; but all are *banished*, till their conversations appear to the world more wise and modest.”

The high justice nods. “And so they are.”

“The king hath called his Parliament, my lord.”

“He hath.”

“I will lay odds that, ere this year expire, we bear our civil swords and native fire as far as *France!*” says the prince. “I heard a bird so sing—whose music, to my thinking, pleased the king!

“Come, will you hence?”

They walk together toward the palace.

## Epilogue

A sprightly actor springs forward onto the stage’s trodden rushes to address his still-applauding audience.

“First my fear, then my courtesy; last my speech!

“My fear is your *displeasure*; my courtesy”—he bows, “my *duty!* And my speech: to beg your *pardons!*”

“If you look for a good speech *now*, you undo me, for what I have to say is of *mine own* making, and what indeed I *should* say will, I fret, prove mine own *marring!*”

“But to the *purpose*, and so to the *venture!* Be it known to you, as it *is* very well, I was lately here at the end of a *displeasing* play to pray your patience for it, and to promise you a *better.*”

His tone is clearly wry. The author’s previous play about King Henry IV was very successful, but for portraying a fat knight called Oldcastle, it drew the ire of an influential family by that name.

“I meant indeed to pay you with *this*—which, if like an ill venture it come *unluckily* home, I *break*, and you, my gentle creditors, *lose!* Here I promised you I would be; and here I commit my body to your *mercies!* Abate me *some*, and I will *pay* you a sum—and, as most debtors do, *promise* you infinitely!”

He shrugs, pretending his laughing auditors disapprove: “If my *tongue* cannot entreat you to acquit me, will you command me to use my *legs?*”—perform a jig, as is customary after a stage play. “And yet that were but light payment—to *dance out of your debt!*”

“But a *good* conscience will make any possible satisfaction—and so would *I!*” he quips.

“All the gentle *women* here have forgiven me; if the gentle men will not, then the gentlemen do not agree with the gentlewomen!—which was *never* seen before in such an assembly!”

He speaks over the laughter. “One word more, I beseech you.

“If you be not too much cloyed with *fat* meat, our humble author will continue the story, with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair *Katherine of France!*—where, for anything *I* know, Falstaff shall die of a *sweat*—unless he already be killed by your hard opinions; for *Oldcastle* died a *martyr*, and this is not that man.

“My tongue is weary. When my *legs* are, too, I will bid you good night!—and so kneel down before you.”

He raises an eyebrow at the lewd catcalls, and grins. “But only, indeed, to pray for the



*queen!*" And with that he begins a lively dance, and soon the other players join in.