



Henry IV, Part II

The play picks up the action three years after the death of Hotspur at Shrewsbury. Westmoreland and Lancaster are appointed by the king to lead an army against the last of the rebels. The Archbishop of York, Scroop, is backing the lords Hastings, Mowbray, and Bardolph, along with the tacit support of Northumberland. Northumberland, however, is later dissuaded from joining the rebellion by Lady Grey. Meanwhile, Falstaff is back at the Boar's Head Inn, driving Mistress Quickly out of business with his appetite. Prince Hal visits to have some sport with him, but both he and Falstaff are soon summoned to war by the king, who has come down with a grave illness. Falstaff is to recruit soldiers for the king's army.

This is not a duty one would normally entrust to Falstaff, and true to form, Falstaff finds himself lingering in Gloucestershire with the local justice, Shallow. His "recruits" are easily allowed to buy their way out of service to the army, and Falstaff wastes no opportunity to take advantage of Shallow's hospitality or wallet. In the meantime, the rebel army forces the king to send his younger son, Prince John of Lancaster, to parley with the insurrectionists. John agrees to address the issues raised by the rebels, but only if their army is dispersed. That done, John's army (which has conveniently not disbanded) seizes Scroop and the rest of the lords at the head of the conspiracy. The leaders are summarily executed.

King Henry IV, by this time, is near death with his illness. In a deathbed meeting with Hal, the king is at last reconciled with his son, convinced that his true nobility will prevail. With that accomplished, the king dies; Hal ascends to the throne as King Henry V. When Falstaff hears this news, he immediately sets out for London—after all, Falstaff is a freeloader, and the thought of his old friend's new station has him envisioning all kinds of rewards. To his shock, Henry bars him and any of his acquaintances from henceforth approaching within ten miles of him on pain of death.

Dramatis Personae

Rumour, the presenter
King Henry the Fourth
Henry, Prince of Wales; afterwards King Henry the Fifth
Thomas of Clarence
Prince John of Lancaster
Humphrey of Gloucester
Earl of Warwick
Earl of Westmoreland
Earl of Surrey
Gower
Harcourt
Blunt
Lord Chief Justice
A Servant to the Chief Justice
Earl of Northumberland
Scroop, Archbishop of York
Lord Mowbray
Lord Hastings
Lord Bardolph
Sir John Coleville
Travers and Morton
Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, and a Page
Poins and Peto
Shallow and Silence, country justices
Davy, Shallow's servant
Mouldy, Shadow, Wart, Feeble, and Bullcalf, recruits
Fang and Snare, sheriff's officers
Lady Northumberland
Lady Percy
Mistress Quickly
Doll Tearsheet
Lords and Attendants
Officers, Messengers, Soldiers
Porter, Drawer, Beadles, Grooms, etc.
A Dancer *Speaker of the Epilogue*