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HENRY IV, Part 1

Text: Q1, 1598.

Main sources: Holinshed. Also *The Mirror for Magistrates*, 1559. Samuel Daniel, *Civil Wars*, 1595. John Stow, *Chronicles of England*, 1580.

Act I King Henry IV, faced by an uprising under Owen Glendower in Wales, and the refusal of Harry Percy (Hotspur) to surrender prisoners to the King after defeating the Scots, is unable to lead a crusade, as a penance for the murder of Richard II, to the Holy Land. Prince Hal, his eldest son — companion to Sir John Falstaff, a fat rogue, Poins, Bardolph and Peto — plans a robbery at Gadshill to reveal Falstaff's cowardice. Hotspur is angry when Henry still refuses to ransom Hotspur's brother-in-law, Mortimer, recently married to the daughter of his captor, Glendower. Joined by Northumberland and Worcester, and expecting support from Glendower, Douglas and the Archbishop of York, he decides to rebel against the King.

Act II After the robbery at Gadshill, Hal and Poins reappear, disguised, chasing off the frightened Falstaff and Bardolph. Hotspur bids farewell to his wife and sets off for Wales. At the Boar's Head Tavern when Falstaff boasts of the robbery, Hal calls his bluff. The King sends for Hal. When Falstaff, impersonating the King, acts out what the King will say to Hal, Hal, in turn pretending to be King, upbraids Falstaff ruthlessly.

Act III The rebel leaders gather. Hotspur quarrels over the proposed division of the Kingdom after victory. The King berates Hal for his behaviour, contrasting him with the honour-seeking Hotspur. Hal promises to outdo Hotspur or die. The King initiates plans to fight the rebels. Hal informs Falstaff that he is reconciled with his father, and is now off to fight at his father's side. He offers Falstaff a command.

Act IV When the rebels learn that Northumberland is ill, Glendower delayed, and the royal forces on their way, Hotspur urges immediate battle. Falstaff collecting a ragged army, sets out for Shrewsbury. When Blunt is sent from the King to learn of the rebels' grievances, Hotspur relates all the King's ingratitude to his family (the Percys).

Act V The King offers, through Worcester and Vernon, pardon to the rebels if they disband. Hal offers to fight Hotspur in single combat. Falstaff cynically considers martial honour. Worcester, not trusting the King's offer, keeps it from Hotspur. In the subsequent battle of Shrewsbury, Hal saves his father, kills Hotspur. The King's side wins. Falstaff claims to have killed Hotspur. Worcester and Vernon are executed, Douglas for his valour, freed. Prince John, Hal's brother, and Westmoreland are sent to fight off Northumberland and Scroop; the King and Hal set out to suppress Glendower.

HENRY IV, Part 2

Text: Q1, 1600.

Main sources: Holinshed. Anon, *The Famous Victories of Henry Vth*, pub. 1598. Also Samuel Daniel, *Civil Wars*, 1595.

Act I After Rumour's warning (as Chorus) that he has spread false news that Hotspur has won the battle of Shrewsbury, Northumberland learns that his son, Hotspur, is dead, the battle lost, and the King's troops are approaching under Prince John and Westmoreland. He decides to rally his supporters. The Chief Justice, impatient at Falstaff's braggadocio manner, warns him to behave, reminding him that he is to accompany Prince John to fight Northumberland. The Archbishop of York decides to continue supporting Northumberland.

Act II Mistress Quickly, hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern, demands Falstaff's arrest for debt, but he wheedles her into withdrawing her summons, lending him more money and giving him supper. Hal and Poins returning from battle, wishing to trick Falstaff, disguise themselves as potmen. Northumberland decides to leave for Scotland, until he sees how the rebellion fares. Falstaff joins Doll Tearsheet and Mistress Quickly for supper and music, with Bardolph and Pistol. Hal and Poins, having overheard Falstaff's comments on the Prince, reveal themselves. Hal leaves to rejoin the King, Falstaff to his command.

Act III The King, disheartened about the rebellion, is comforted by news of Glendower's death. Falstaff, recruiting troops in the Cotswolds, is welcomed by Justices Shallow (a friend from youth) and Silence.

Act IV York learns that Northumberland has left. Westmoreland urges York and his confederates, Mowbray and Hastings, to make peace with Prince John. York agrees, and, despite Mowbray's misgivings, orders the rebels to disperse. Immediately Prince John and Westmoreland arrest the rebel leaders for high treason. Falstaff, arriving with a prisoner, asks leave to return to Gloucestershire, while Prince John, learning that his father is ill, hurries to Westminster. The sick King, hearing of the rebels' defeat, falls asleep, the crown beside him. Hal, believing his father dead, takes up the crown, when Henry, awaking, accuses him of wishing him dead. Hal refutes this, speaking warily to the King, who advises him to secure his position as king by the distraction of an expedition abroad.

Act V Falstaff and Bardolph settle in with the goodhearted Shallow. The King dies. Falstaff, hearing of Hal's succession, sets out, sure of his promotion, for London. On the coronation route, Falstaff calls out familiarly to Hal, who rejects him. As a bewildered Falstaff claims he will be sent for privately, he and his cronies are ordered to the Fleet prison. Prince John comments that all will be well — for them, when they have learnt their lesson, for the realm, as a result of Hal's honesty and justice, and for the future, with the expedition to France.

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