

# **SUCH STUFF PLAYERS'**

## **HENRY IV - PARTS 1 and 2**

**A 90 minute abridged version in the original Shakespearean language**

*(Such Stuff Players' production is true to the original language and script, but is an amalgamation of Henry IV Pt. 1 and Henry IV Pt. 2)*

### **A BRIEF SUMMARY**

Our play begins in the aftermath of a coup. England's King Henry IV has taken the crown by force - he overthrew and eventually killed the previous king. Henry's shaky grasp on power is challenged by his former allies, who now rebel against him. The King's right to rule is further weakened by the behavior of his eldest son. Prince Harry (Hal) is heir to the throne, but his carousing with commoners instills doubts about whether he could ever become a good King. To make matters worse for the King, the rebels have a 'Harry' of their own. Harry Percy (Hotspur) is young, valiant, charismatic – and leading the rebel cause.

Shakespeare's play follows these two groups – the King's side and the rebels – as they move towards their inevitable battle, a battle which will ultimately decide who dies, who lives and who will reign in England. Shakespeare also introduces some of his most memorable characters (including Falstaff, Mistress Quickly and Justice Shallow) in a subplot that follows these ruffians and their friends, and paints a vivid and highly entertaining picture of the life of commoners in both rural and urban England.

Entertaining and funny, Henry IV is also thought-provoking, raising age-old questions:

What is honour?

Who fights wars (and who instigates them)?

How should we live our lives – choosing duty or choosing freedom? Choosing expediency, or taking a risk and doing what is right?

### **A DETAILED SUMMARY**

#### **PROLOGUE - Events Leading up to Opening of Henry IV**

England's King Henry IV took the crown by overthrowing (and eventually killing) the previous king, Richard II. Henry's shaky grasp on power is soon challenged by his former allies (Worcester, Hastings) who now rebel against him. The King's right to rule is further weakened by the behavior of his eldest son; Prince Harry (Hal) is heir to the throne but his carousing with commoners make everyone doubt if he is a fit successor to the King. To make matters worse for

the King's side, the rebels have a 'Harry' of their own; Harry Percy (Hotspur) is young, valiant, charismatic – and leading the rebel cause. Shakespeare's play follows these two groups – the King's side and the rebels – as they move towards their inevitable clash, a battle which will ultimately decide who dies, who lives and who will reign in England.

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## **THE PLAY BEGINS**

**Act 1 scene i** - Palace Apartment: Hal, Falstaff, Poins (morning-after-the-night-before)

Such Stuff Players' version of Henry IV opens in the palace where Prince Hal is recovering from a night's carousing with his friend the old knight Sir John Falstaff. Soon they are joined by another ruffian, Ned Poins, who proposes a plot to rob travelers of their money, a plot the prince somewhat hesitantly agrees to join. This hesitancy melts away once Falstaff leaves and Ned reveals his true plot; Falstaff and their other companions will rob the travelers, then Poins and Hal (disguised) will rob their friends. The joke, says Poins, will be to hear the lies that Falstaff will concoct in the aftermath as he spins the story to his account.

**Act 1 scene ii** - Palace Hall: King, Pr John, Pr Thomas, Westmoreland, Blunt (bad news)

This scene is immediately contrasted with a scene in the hall of the palace, where King Henry IV is informed that the rebels are gaining strength, and that even his former allies may be turning against him. He bemoans the behavior of his son the Prince, admires that of Harry Percy (Hotspur) and even goes so far as to wish that it could be proven that the two Harrys were switched at birth.

**Act 1 scene iii** - Inn Yard (preparing the robbery): Edward, William, Peto

Following a short scene in which servants Edward and William complain about fleas and help to set up the planned highway robbery, we return to the palace.

**Act 1 scene iv** - Palace Hall: King, Princes John and Thomas, Westmoreland, Blunt, Hotspur, Hastings, Worcester (conflict between King and former allies)

This time the King (flanked by his advisors Westmoreland and Blunt, and his younger sons Princes John and Thomas) is meeting with his former allies Hastings, Worcester, and Worcester's nephew Hotspur (Harry Percy). Quickly we see the rifts increase – the King banishes Worcester from court, then chastises Hotspur for not turning over prisoners that he took in battle. Hotspur tries to justify his actions, but angers the King when he asks the King to

ransom his brother-in-law Mortimer (captured in battle with Scots rebels). Mortimer, it turns out, has a claim to the throne, and the King not only refuses to ransom him, but refuses to even hear his name spoken. After Henry IV leaves the stage in a rage, Hotspur, his uncle Worcester, and Hastings develop their plot to bring down the King.

**Act 1 scene v** - Highway Robbery: Hal, Poins, Falstaff, Peto, Bardolph, 2 Travellers (Bardolph, Peto and Falstaff rob travellers. Then Hal and Poins in disguise rob the other three)

Here the story shifts back to the “ruffians” – Hal’s low-life companions Falstaff, Poins, Bardolph and Peto. Poins’ plan works perfectly – Falstaff, Peto and Bardolph successfully rob the travelers of their treasure, and then Poins and Prince Hal successfully rob their unknowing friends.

**Act 2 scene i** - Warkworth Castle: Hotspur (reading letter warning him of the risks of the rebellion)

This scene is followed by a short one in which Hotspur reads a letter that warns him of the risks that the rebels are taking. Unfazed, and expressing confidence in those that are his allies, Hotspur rejects the warning and continues to plan for rebellion.

**Act 2 scene ii** - Boar’s Head Inn: Quickly, Hal, Poins, Francis, Falstaff, Bardolph, Peto, Lord Chief-Justice, Sam (teasing Francis, Falstaff’s story, play-within a play, LC-J)

At this point the play shifts setting and takes us to Eastcheap (a seedy area of London renowned for its taverns), and Mistress Quickly’s Boar’s Head Inn. Poins and Prince Hal pass time waiting for their friends to return by teasing Francis, a young waiter. At last Falstaff, Peto and Bardolph arrive and Falstaff spins an enormous tale to cover their failure. Caught out by Hal and Poins, Falstaff is unrepentant, and true to form he turns the ‘lie’ to his advantage. They all begin to party, only to be interrupted by a banging on the door of the tavern, and the news that the rebel forces are gathering and that Hal will have to return to the palace and his role as King’s son. To prepare for his unavoidable meeting with his disappointed and angry father, Hal and Falstaff role play the meeting in a hilarious ‘play-within-a-play’. This too is interrupted by more banging on the door. This time it’s the Lord Chief-Justice come to bring the rule of law down on Falstaff and the other thieves. Hal hides his friends and covers for them, but loses his temper and rashly strikes the Lord Chief-Justice on the head to send him on his way. Repentant, Hal’s final soliloquy in this scene reflects on his own behavior, and his assertion that he is doing this intentionally so as to look good when he ultimately changes his ways. This scene leaves us with one of the central questions of the play. Resolutions are hard to keep... Will Hal really be able to keep his resolution to leave the lively fun of the Eastcheap tavern and his friends there, in order to take on the responsibilities of Kingship?

**Act 2 scene iii** - Douglas’ home: Douglas, Mortimer, Hotspur, Worcester, Gaelic ladies, Lady Mortimer. (Rebels prepare and leave home, music)

While Hal and his friends are partying in Eastcheap, the rebels continue to mobilize - now in the home of the Scots rebel Douglas. Douglas has a new son-in-law: his former captive (and now ally) Mortimer has married Douglas' daughter although he speaks only English and she speaks only Gaelic. Music, however, is the universal language of love, and she sings him off to war (much to the disgust of the fiery and impatient Hotspur).

**Act 2 scene iv** -Palace: King, Hal. (father-son confrontation)

Back at the palace, King Henry IV calls his son Prince Hal to account for his irresponsible ways, even accusing his own son of plotting with the rebels. Hal promises to reform his behavior, and they are off to gather troops for war.

**Act 2 scene v** - Boar's Head Inn: Falstaff, Bardolph, Peto, Quickly, Hal, Francis (Falstaff complains of pickpockets, Hal enters en route to war)

The first stop for Hal is back at the Eastcheap tavern, where Mistress Quickly (the owner of the tavern) and Falstaff are in conflict. Falstaff is up to his tricks again, this time trying to convince Quickly that his pocket has been picked, that he's lost valuables, and that she should (as inn-keeper) be held accountable. Hal arrives, sorts them out and then gives Falstaff his orders – Falstaff is to recruit foot-soldiers for the battle. With a teary farewell from Quickly they are off to war.

**Act 3 scene i** - Gloucestershire: Shallow, Silence, Davy, Mouldy, Shadow, Feeble, Bullcalf, Bardolph, Falstaff (Falstaff recruiting soldiers)

Falstaff travels the countryside to recruit soldiers, and arrives at the Gloucestershire home of a friend from his youth, Justice Shallow (and Shallow's cousin Justice Silence). The two justices have brought together 4 recruits from which Falstaff is to choose three soldiers. Not surprisingly, the fittest young man bribes Falstaff and Bardolph and gets to go home, while the other sorry specimens are forced to go off to war.

**Act 3 scene ii** - Rebel Camp: Hotspur, Worcester, Mortimer, Hastings, Douglas (preparing for battle)

The rebels meanwhile have struck camp near Shrewsbury and prepare for battle.

**Act 3 scene iii** - Roadway near battle: Falstaff, Hal, Westmoreland, All (Parade of Falstaff's sorry troops)

Hal is nearing the battlefield, and comes across Falstaff and his ragged collection of 'soldiers' on the road near Shrewsbury. When Hal and Westmoreland express concerns about the pathetic

state of these men, Falstaff breezily suggests that they are good enough to be shot at, and can fill a grave as well as their 'betters'.

**Act 3 scene iv** - Rebel Camp: Hotspur, Douglas, Worcester, Hastings, Mortimer, Blunt (Blunt offers peaceful greetings from the King, possibility of a truce rejected by rebels)

All the forces are getting closer to the battlefield; the King too arrives at Shrewsbury and sends an offer of peace to the rebels, which they reject.

**Act 3 scene v** - King's Camp: King, Hal, Westmoreland, Pr. John, Falstaff, Blunt, Worcester, Hastings (Hal offers to rebel emissaries that he will do single combat with Hotspur to avert a battle)

Hal makes an offer of single combat with Hotspur as a way to settle the issue and save the spilling of blood that a battle will surely entail. The King, joined by Hal and Falstaff, and flanked by his advisors Westmoreland and Blunt, and the younger Prince, Prince John, ready themselves for battle.

**Act 4 scene i** - Rebel Camp: Worcester, Hastings, Hotspur, Mortimer, Douglas (Hastings and Worcester refuse to tell Hotspur of Hal's offer of single combat. Battle plans)

In an act of cold treachery, Hotspur's uncle Worcester refuses to even tell Hotspur of this offer (in case Hotspur would have accepted it), and battle is now unavoidable.

**Act 4 scene ii** - Battle: all (battle between the two sides. Douglas kills Blunt. Falstaff/Hal conflict)

Battle surges across the stage as the troops on both sides engage each other. This is followed by hand-to-hand combat between the rebel Douglas and the King's ally Sir Walter Blunt. Blunt is dressed in the same battle uniform as the King in order to confuse the enemy. He fights bravely but ultimately pays with his life. Hotspur enters and disappoints Douglas (who had hoped that he'd killed the King and ended the battle) by unmasking the body to show that it's just Blunt. Falstaff and Hal enters – Falstaff is trying to get away from battle, while Hal is in search of a new weapon so that he can re-enter the battle. To Hal's disgust, the 'pistol' that Falstaff gives him is actually a bottle of 'sack' (wine). The two separate as Hal goes in search of Hotspur while Falstaff seeks to avoid Hotspur.

**Act 4 scene iii** - Battle: King, Hal, Falstaff, Prince John, Westmoreland, Hotspur, Douglas (Douglas battles King, Hal saves King, Hotspur and Hal battle, Douglas and Falstaff battle, Falstaff feigns death, Falstaff recovers and 'wounds' Hotspur, Battle ends)

Hal, his brother Prince John, Westmoreland and the King take a brief breather from the battle. Hal is bleeding heavily but refuses to step back, while all are impressed with the valor and skill

shown by young Prince John. We begin to see that, if Hal were to leave Eastcheap and his drinking buddies behind and truly embrace a new life at court, he might find a friend in his younger brother. Prince John, Westmoreland and Hal leave to seek Hotspur, and the King, alone, finds himself confronted by “the Douglas.” Weak and weary, the King is in danger of being beaten and slain but is saved when Hal re-enters and drives Douglas away. As soon as the King leaves the site of this battle, Hotspur enters, and we have the long-awaited confrontation between the two Harrys. Falstaff enters and cheers on Hal, but then is attacked by the Douglas. To avoid being killed, Falstaff feigns death and Douglas leaves him alone. After a mighty battle, Hal finally defeats Hotspur and kills him. Hal pays his respects to Hotspur, then on leaving to re-enter the fray he comes across the ‘corpse’ of Falstaff, where Hal grieves the passing of his old friend. Barely has Hal left the scene when Falstaff pops back up, filled with life. He sees Hotspur’s body, and sees an opportunity - he decides to stab Hotspur in the leg and pretend that Hotspur too came ‘back to life’ and had to be killed by Falstaff. When Prince John and Prince Hal re-enter the scene, Falstaff tells his tale. The two princes may be dubious (especially Prince Hal who knows that Falstaff is lying) but they accept the tale (and by so doing Hal allows Falstaff to take the glory of killing this rebel leader).

**Act 4 scene iv** - Battlefield: All (Rebels punished, King’s side wins, King falls ill)

The trumpets sound – the battle is over and the King’s side has won. The rebel leaders still living are brought before the King and will be executed, and the rebels have been vanquished. The joy of this news is too much for the aging King who collapses before us.

**THE LAST PART OF THIS PRODUCTION (WHICH COMPRISES KING HENRY IV PART 2) STARTS HERE.**

**Act 4 scene v** - Rumour

The embodiment of Rumour now takes the stage to tell us of the rumours running through the kingdom.

**Act 5 scene i** - London Street: Falstaff, Boy, Lord C-J, Sam, Quickly, Snare, Fang, Bardolph, Messenger (Quickly uses Fang/Snare to arrest Falstaff, Lord C-J chastises Falstaff)

The next scene opens in London. Falstaff has a new companion, a page (“Boy”) given to him by Prince Hal as an honour for ‘killing’ Hotspur. The streets of London can be risky for Falstaff though – he promptly sees the Lord Chief-Justice (and his servant Sam), who still is suspicious of Falstaff’s role in the earlier robbery. Falstaff has just escaped from the Lord Chief-Justice when he is attacked by Fang and Snare, thugs hired by Mistress Quickly to arrest Falstaff and make him re-pay her the money he owes her (and, as we shall soon find out, to get him to live up to a promise he made to marry her). The fight in the streets brings back the Lord Chief-Justice. His arrival unites Quickly and Falstaff again, while the Lord Chief-Justice receives a message warning him that the King is very ill.

**Act 5 scene ii** - London Street: Hal, Poins, Bardolph, Boy (Hal and Poins plot to trick Falstaff)

Meanwhile Prince Hal, despite his resolutions, and despite his valour on the battlefield at Shrewsbury, has backslid again, and fallen into company with his old friend Poins. Together they hatch another plot to trick Falstaff – this time they will disguise themselves as waiters and eavesdrop on Falstaff at the Boar's Head Inn.

**Act 5 scene iii** - Palace: King, Westmoreland (sleepless King is ill)

While they plot their trick, the King's health is rapidly failing; we see him stumbling, sleepless through the castle, ridden with guilt for the regicide that he committed to take the throne.

**Act 5 scene iv** - Boar's Head: Falstaff, Bardolph, Boy, Quickly, Poins, Peto, Hal, Francis, Edward, William, Pistol (tricking Falstaff, interruption by Pistol, party – and then Peto informs Hal that his father is ill)

Neglectful of this, Hal hides out with Poins at the Boar's Head Inn, to the delight of the servers there. Falstaff and Mistress Quickly enter; they are soon joined by a friend of Falstaff's, the crazy-man Pistol. Pistol's behavior is so extreme that he promptly gets kicked back out of the tavern. Poins and Hal eavesdrop as Falstaff slanders them; they jump out to catch him in the act, but true to form Falstaff is yet again (to the amusement of Hal, and frustration of Poins) able to talk his way out of trouble. This light-hearted scene is interrupted when Peto arrives to tell Prince Hal that his father is deathly ill. Chastising himself for his own again-negligent behavior, Hal charges off to the palace. Falstaff, meanwhile, has yet another plan up his sleeve – he will return to his friends in Gloucestershire in order to try to get more money from Justice Shallow.

**Act 5 scene v** - Palace Bed chamber: King, Westmoreland, Hal, Pr John, Pr Thomas (King is ill, Hal thinks dad is dead, reconciliation between father and son)

Hal arrives at the palace just in time – his father is very ill, but still alive. Hal asks to sit alone with him, and his brothers and Westmoreland leave him at his dying father's bedside. There on the King's pillow is the crown. The King's breathing has become so weak that Hal thinks his father has died. In anguish at his father's death, Hal berates the crown, scolding it for having taken such a toll on the life of his father. Hal leaves the bedside in tears, taking the crown with him. Suddenly the King awakes – he was only sleeping after all. Shocked to find the crown gone, King Henry IV calls out and Westmoreland and the princes rush to his side. The King denounces Hal, believing that Hal was eager for his father's death so that he could be King. This sets up a final scene of reconciliation between the father and the son; the King dies shortly after hearing and accepting Hal's explanations, expressions of love and tears.

**Act 6 scene i** - Palace: Westmoreland, Lord Chief-Justice, Hal, Pr Thomas, Pr John (worries in the aftermath of the King's death, new King Henry V [Hal] reassures)

The King is dead, now long live the King. Prince Hal is the newly crowned King Henry V. His brothers, Princes John and Thomas, along with Westmoreland are nervous about what King Henry's reign will bring. Will he fall back into his dissolute ways and allow the kingdom to collapse into chaos and ruin? Most nervous of all is the Lord Chief-Justice. He knows that Prince Hal dislikes him, and wishes that he himself had died along with the King. Prince Hal/King Henry V now enters the scene. It's an awkward moment – he is uncomfortable in his new royal robes and can tell that all around him are anxious about what sort of ruler he will be. Quickly the new King Henry V acts to put them at ease. He embraces his brothers and assures them he will care for them as if he were their father. Then he greets the Lord Chief-Justice. Their conversation is tense at first, but then the newly crowned King commends the Lord Chief-Justice for his courage and honourable service, and assures him that he will remain in his role, and be a trusted advisor to the court.

**Act 6 scene ii** - Gloucestershire: Shallow, Silence, Davy/Delia, Falstaff, Bardolph, Boy, Pistol (Falstaff trying to gouge Shallow, news of Hal becoming King)

Falstaff is unaware of all these happenings at court – off in Gloucestershire, he is putting into place his plans to get money from Justice Shallow. Pistol arrives suddenly, breathlessly, to give the big news that King Henry IV is dead, and that Falstaff's beloved Hal is now King. Falstaff can hardly get his boots on fast enough – filled with joy for Hal, and the assumption that this will mean riches and power and freedom from law for Falstaff and all his friends – they all bolt off to London for the coronation.

**Act 6 scene iii** - London Street: All. (Parade of the newly-crowned King Henry V. Rejection of Falstaff)

The last scene of the play takes place in the street outside the palace, immediately after the coronation ceremony. The newly crowned King Henry V walks the streets to greet his people. Falstaff, Bardolph, Boy, Quickly, Peto and Pistol are all there, waving. Falstaff calls out hopefully to the young King – but is rebuffed by the King. Hal is not heartless – before he leaves the stage he says that while he banishes Falstaff and the others, he also gives them an allowance (so that necessity won't drive them to steal). If they reform they can perhaps come near him again. Falstaff, shaken, tries to bluster that this is just an act, and that King Henry V will call for him in private. But all know the truth, and it is underscored when the Lord Chief-Justice returns to the scene and arrests the Eastcheap ruffians and sends them to jail. It's a harsh end – Prince Hal has chosen what he must. He has chosen the rule of law over freedom. He's finally living out his resolutions for reforming his life. But the cost is high, and leaves us to wonder if the cost is in fact too high.