

THE KING

by

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EXT. FIELD / NORTH ENGLAND - AFTERNOON

TITLE CARD: the early 15th century

A scorched battlefield littered with the dead and dying.

Hundreds of tangled bodies strewn across the field. Horses among them. So thick and twisted they carpet the sodden earth. A deformed mass. Bloody, black and brown.

A WARRIOR walks the field. Broad shouldered. A cape of fur over leather and chain mail. He walks laboured.

A body squirms at his feet. He stops. He raises his worn sword and, as if planting a flag, he thrusts the metal down into the dying man's back. The body arches stiff and then goes limp.

He continues on in this fashion, casually roaming the destroyed bodies and giving those still moving their silence. Around him, across the field, others pore over the bodies, pilfering valuables or taking the not-fatally wounded hostage.

The warrior turns. His scarred face, young but lined. Sad, soulful eyes. Despite being a clear victor here, he looks displeased, agitated, dark.

This is SIR HENRY 'HOTSPUR' PERCY. He continues his macabre walk.

He stops at the body of a man wheezing his last shallow breaths into the dirt. With his filthy, bloody boot, Hotspur heaves the man onto his back and regards him with what looks for a moment like pity. He then plunges his sword into the man's chest.

Walk. Stab. Walk. Stab.

He watches an injured man stand shakily and walk - fall - get to his feet again and walk. The man trips and keeps moving.

Hotspur walks beside him for a few steps. Falling into step he watches the limping man's action, studies him curiously. Blood from a deep gash across his face makes it impossible for him to see from either eye. Other injuries too.

HOTSPUR

Where go you, my friend?

The man turns to the sound. Scared, he tries to continue.

HOTSPUR (CONT'D)

You're hobbling in the wrong direction. That wind you feel is blowing from England. Scotland is that way.

The limping man, uncertain, turns and follows the wind.

Hotspur turns and walks away. Stab.

INT. ANTECHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Royal Court, London. Hotspur, cleaned from the battlefield, walks the hall with his father, the EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND (50), beside him. Northumberland appears wary. Hotspur strides.

They are met by sentries and the Chief Justice SIR WILLIAM GASCOIGNE.

WILLIAM
My Lords Percy.

HOTSPUR
We have come to see the King.

WILLIAM
I'm afraid His Majesty is engaged
with other concerns. Is he
expecting your visit?

HOTSPUR
I should hope he is. We are but the
men who have spilled blood in his
name. I should hope that he expects
our visit with enthusiasm.

William notes Hotspur's hostility and disappears through the antechamber to a room beyond.

Hotspur's agitation is a source of unease for Northumberland - an unease which cannot be addressed openly before the silent, helmeted sentries standing watch.

NORTHUMBERLAND
My son. Be calm.

Hotspur stares, boiling, in the direction of the door beyond which the King is engaged with his other matters.

INT. PARLOUR / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hotspur and Northumberland sit at one end of a long dining table. They are quiet. Hotspur's agitation boils.

A door opens. KING HENRY IV hobbles in. Royal courtiers follow: William, the EARL OF WESTMORLAND, LORD SCROPE OF MASHAM, the EARL OF CAMBRIDGE, SIR THOMAS GREY, the EARL OF DORSET among them.

HENRY IV

My lords, I am most sorry for
making you wait. I know you have
travelled far and from great
travail.

The King extends his signet for the lords to kiss.
Northumberland does so obligingly, eyes lowered. Hotspur
kisses the ring while looking Henry coldly in the eye.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

I pray you will know this time of
civil unrest consumes me day and
night.

As the King and his courtiers take their seats, servants bring
food to the table. Others present jugs and bowls of water for
the men to rinse their hands.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

I understand battle with the rebel
Scots was hard fought. Is this
true?

Hotspur stares. Northumberland fills the awkward space.

NORTHUMBERLAND

It was, my liege. We lost some
three hundred men.

They bow their heads as the King says a Latin blessing.

HENRY IV

Benedic nos Dómine et haec Túa dóna
quae de Túa largitáte súmus
sumptúri. Per Christum Dóminum
nóstrum. Ámen.

ALL

Ámen.

The men eat, the King as heartily as his frailty will allow.

Hotspur doesn't eat. Henry looks to him.

HENRY IV

And how many prisoners were taken?

NORTHUMBERLAND

Some two hundred, my liege.

HENRY IV

Good Hotspur, you led the charge.
Were any prisoners of note taken?

HOTSPUR

Many.

HENRY IV

Are they in train?

HOTSPUR

No.

Henry eats, ignoring the insolence.

HENRY IV

And why is that? Why have they not been brought directly to me as is their designation?

HOTSPUR

Why will you not pay cousin Mortimer's ransom?

HENRY IV

You'll need to speak up, my boy. I'm an old man. My ears are filled with hair.

HOTSPUR

Cousin Mortimer is held by the rebels of Wales. Why do you refuse to pay his ransom?

HENRY IV

I refuse to pay Mortimer's ransom because I refuse to believe Mortimer a prisoner. I rather believe Mortimer to be a traitor.

Henry lets this sit. He eats. Hotspur boils. Moments pass.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

Your victory over the Scots was a most heroic one, heroic because improbable. Our most recent loss to the Welsh, however, should not have been suffered. Our strength should have had it staved. And I must conclude only that it was suffered with Mortimer's help, that Mortimer has joined the Welsh rebels, that he has betrayed England and that far from being a prisoner, your cousin is now an enemy of mine and, therefore, of yours.

Henry examines his chicken wing. Hotspur stares. The other men try not to be noticed.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

Do you agree with my précis, good Hotspur?

HOTSPUR

No.

NORTHUMBERLAND

My son.

HOTSPUR

I believe yours to be the ramblings of a crazy old demon.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Harry. Please. Stop this.

HENRY IV

Let him speak. I wish to hear him.

NORTHUMBERLAND

My liege -

HOTSPUR

Yours are the ramblings of an old man so saturated with malice and mistrust that he no longer knows up from down, who can no longer see beyond the walls of his own monstrous schloss.

Henry stops eating. He pays Hotspur his full attention, almost inviting Hotspur to continue. Hotspur, emboldened, does so.

HOTSPUR (CONT'D)

My family has served you. My father, my uncle. We aided you in your ascension. And still we fight for you. Cousin Mortimer has fought for you - hard and for many years. And yet while you now slobber over that chicken's wing, he shivers in a western prison awaiting mutilation at the hands of Welsh witches.

NORTHUMBERLAND

My liege, you must forgive my son. He needs rest. We come only to advocate for your help in securing Mortimer's release.

HOTSPUR

All that we have done for you we have done for the good of England, but I fear now that we have made a terrible mistake. I fear the battles we have fought have been fought only to indulge your hateful madness. Our lands are now more riven with war than ever before. You have rebellion stewing in all corners. The Scots are not finished. The Welsh have only just begun. And for what? Why do you think this might be, old man? Who do you imagine might be to blame for this?

All are stunned silent. Henry watches Hotspur strangely and impassively for a protracted moment.

NORTHUMBERLAND

My liege...

HENRY IV

They say chickens can't fly, but I've seen one eke enough wing flap to clear a fence. And then it's free!... But then so too are the foxes.

Henry continues his dull stare at Hotspur. Hotspur boils, but Henry's gleeful crypticism is intimidating.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

You are right, young Percy. I owe you much. I owe your family still more. You have fought nobly for me. You carry wounds fresh for me to see. And your grievances too - they have been heard. But if the Scottish traitors you have taken prisoner are not brought to me as speedily as they might travel, I will hang you by your fucking neck.

Henry watches him another moment.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

Has *this* been heard, Percy?

Hotspur fumes. He heaves his chair from the table and strides to the door. Northumberland rises meekly and bows.

Scrope looks to him, catching his eye.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Please forgive us, Your Majesty.

They scurry after Hotspur. Henry watches them leave. The courtiers remain silent, unable to read the King's disposition.

HENRY IV

What a venomous boy. He'll betray me now. I'm sure of it.

Henry returns his attention to his chicken wing.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

But if only *he* were my son.

INT. APARTMENT / EASTCHEAP - DAY

PRINCE 'HAL' HENRY (25) lies face down and naked on a bed in a spartan single-room apartment. He's sprawled and snoring.

Daylight punches through the window. Sounds of people and animals from the street below.

The sound of keys in the door. It opens. An unkempt SIR JOHN FALSTAFF (45) and BEALE (26) enter. Falstaff's arm bleeds badly.

Falstaff shuts the door behind him loudly. Hal wakes with a start.

HAL

What is this?

BEALE

Falstaff has injured his self.

HAL

How did you get in?

FALSTAFF

The door was ajar.

HAL

It wasn't.

FALSTAFF

It was. It was ajar.

HAL

It was not ajar.

FALSTAFF

How else might I gain entry? Are you accusing me of having cut myself a secret key?

HAL

Yes.

BEALE

Falstaff has injured his self, Hal.

HAL

Why have you come here? What happened to you?

Hal's head is throbbing. Beale rifles through Hal's stuff.

FALSTAFF

I think it best a man of your standing not be burdened with those particulars. I think it best the circumstances in which the injury was accrued be left entirely mysterious.

Beale has found a bottle of liquor.

BEALE

(to Hal)

Will you perform the small repairs?

HAL

No.

FALSTAFF

Your Highness. This task requires expertise. Should you not assist, I fear our friendship may come to a foul end right here on your floor.

INT. APARTMENT / EASTCHEAP - MOMENTS LATER

Hal stirs honey in a pot. Beale pours wine over the gash in Falstaff's arm.

FALSTAFF

There's a fresh coin in this for you.

HAL

I don't want your coin. I will require your undiminished loyalty and devotion from here til Megiddo.

FALSTAFF

You have that already. You're a soft negotiator.

Hal puts the honey pot down and goes to the fireplace. He pulls an iron rod from the fire. Beale trickles more booze.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

You're wasting good wine.

BEALE

I'm keeping it clean.

Hal sits beside Falstaff. He wipes the wound with a strip of linen. He then presses the red hot poker right onto it. Falstaff screams a scream that quickly turns to maniacal laughter.

EXT. STREET / EASTCHEAP - DAY

Hal, Falstaff and Beale walk the street in a mangy part of London. Butchers' stalls, garbage and mud. Fires and smoke. Dogs, pigs and filthy kids.

Two men in clean cloaks step out of a dark doorway and follow.

Another two men appear from an alley and step in front of Hal, their mouths and noses covered by handkerchiefs.

CLOAKED MAN

Prince Henry.

Falstaff and Beale are immediately on edge. They reach discreetly inside their coats for concealed weapons.

HAL

Who are you?

CLOAKED MAN

We come from the royal court. We wish to speak with you privately.

HAL

For what?

CLOAKED MAN

Please, sire. Privately.

FALSTAFF

Privately in the middle of Eastcheap? Shall I make a quick up and down to request a mass covering of ears?

CLOAKED MAN
 (ignoring Falstaff)
 Please, sire.

Hal registers the look of earnest intent on the cloaked man's face. He leads him away into a darkened alcove.

HAL
 What is this?

CLOAKED MAN
 Your father, His Majesty King -

Hal pulls the kerchief from the man's face, forcing him to breathe the fetid air.

CLOAKED MAN (CONT'D)
 Your father, His Majesty King
 Henry, is ill. He requests your
 presence.

Hal pauses momentarily, processing this mention of his father.

HAL
 For what?

CLOAKED MAN
 Your presence has been requested.

HAL
 I suggest you return to the palace
 directly and tell him his request
 was wholly ignored.

CLOAKED MAN
 I have been instructed to deliver
 the request with great urgency.

HAL
 Then you might tell him your
 urgency was also wholly ignored.

Hal steps past the man, leading Falstaff and Beale away.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - DAY

A dingy tavern. Falstaff sits with others, among them Beale and a drunk Hal.

FALSTAFF
 Remember. Remember that as we speak
 there are two Popes. Two! One in
 Rome. One in France.
 (MORE)

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

They both claim to be the Lord's voice here on earth. They can not both be. Why would a good Lord allow his kingdom to be so puzzled? He wouldn't, is that question's answer.

DRINKER

Which then is the true Pope?

FALSTAFF

I say not one or the other. I say the very fact of their quarrel makes them both snakes. And so, if our holy Roman fathers can not convey to us a true voice of authority, why should we assume that those snakes beneath *them* speak with any authority? The whole house is writhing with snakes -

DRINKER

Stop this now.

FALSTAFF

Why now?

DRINKER

I says stop.

FALSTAFF

Are you afraid Thomas might come for you in the night? Don't be afraid of my ideas. They're only ideas.

DRINKER

You sit before me now and tell me you no believe in the power of the one true God.

FALSTAFF

I do not. I *do* believe in the one true God. How dare you suggest otherwise. I do *not* believe that our Archbishop of Canterbury speaks *for* him. I would say our Archbishop Thomas Arundel only *claims* to speak for him.

DRINKER

To what end?

FALSTAFF
Clearly to his own damned end.

DRINKER
You best bite your tongue in the
company you keep. You'll have
yourself necked.

FALSTAFF
(to Hal)
You would have me necked?

Hal smiles.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
(to the drinker)
I would say your devotion to the
Archbishop - if it is devotion and
not a slickly ruse to warm the mood
of this company I keep - I would
say it has me a more true believer
in the one God than you.

DRINKER
Bite your tongue or I will neck you
myself.

FALSTAFF
Bite my tongue? Why on this earth
would I bite my own tongue?

DRINKER
Your word in this air is a poison.

FALSTAFF
Oh. My voice riles you. Maybe then
better you should bite your own
ears off.
(starts laughing at the
thought of it)
Bite your own ears off! And maybe
after you should kick yourself in
your own balls!

The drinker stands as if to confront Falstaff. Hal laughs.

From across the room, the tavern's hostess HOOPER yells -

HOOPER
Stop now.

Falstaff meanwhile is attempting to bite his own ears off.
And then as the drinker takes a step closer, Falstaff springs
up and pins him against a wall, a dagger to his throat.

FALSTAFF

Now now. Settle, my petal. You have a little brutish feeling in your belly. I see there be only one course to straighten this dispute...

(beat, cold stare)

You and I will cockfight...

(releases the drinker, his tone lightens instantly)

Hal, my knee is queer. You must be my cock.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - MOMENTS LATER

A space has been cleared on the floor to stage the cockfight. The 'cocks' are Hal and the drinker, crouched on haunches and facing off. Beale stands behind Hal holding a horizontal sword six inches over his head. Another man stands behind the drinker, holding a stick six inches over his.

FALSTAFF

Rules are plain. You topple over, you lose. You rise your head to the level, you lose. Those are the rules. Un, deux, trois.

The fight is on. Hal and the drinker waddle towards each other, swiping and grabbing. They tussle, retreat. Tussle, retreat. Onlookers yelp support. And then Hal grabs the drinker by his knee and topples him over. Onlookers howl.

Falstaff raises his arms in the air.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

The Lord hath spoken!

Hal lies on his back, laughing.

INT. APARTMENT / EASTCHEAP - NIGHT

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Hal is drunk. He kisses a young woman on the bed. They laugh.

WOMAN

Your Highness.

Hal stops laughing.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Your Highness.

Hal covers her mouth. He is suddenly dark and distant.

HAL

Stop.

She is taken by surprise, intimidated.

HAL (CONT'D)

Stop.

Hal takes his hand away. She seems uneasy. He kisses her. The woman has gone quiet.

INT. APARTMENT / EASTCHEAP - MORNING

Hal snoring. The woman sleeps beside him. Then the sound of a key in the door -

Falstaff enters. He opens the curtain, stirring the woman. With unforced chivalry, he coaxes her from bed. Hal doesn't stir.

FALSTAFF

My lady. It's time to leave.

He gathers her clothes. She wakes groggily.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

That's good, my dear. Jump up. The day has begun.

WOMAN

Why?

FALSTAFF

Shhh. The day has begun. Look. Out there. It's well underway. You might miss it.

Disoriented, the woman lifts herself. Falstaff holds her shirt.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

That's the spirit. Lift your arms.

She lifts her arms. Falstaff pulls the shirt down over her head.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to interrupt your slumber.

He ushers her out of the room and closes the door behind her. He places a cup of ale beside Hal and sits.

HAL

What are you doing?

Hal speaks muffled, groggy, face smudged into the pillow.

FALSTAFF
Can you hear me?

Hal grunts.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
You must get that door fixed.

HAL
What is it?

FALSTAFF
Visit with your father.

HAL
Go away.

FALSTAFF
If your father is indeed enough
gravely ill to request your
presence, then you must visit with
him - it should be better to regret
having done so than it would to
have not. No matter your feelings
for him. If your father is ill, you
must visit with him. And - let me
add - I say it not out of concern
for our king's well being, more for
fear of the drunken soak to which
you be likely to succumb should you
fail to heed his call and he were
to die without you having squared
your ledger... I fear it would be
soak enough to put even me to
shame.

Hal stares at Falstaff, lucid and penetrating, with his one eye
not smudged into the pillow. Falstaff watches Hal a moment.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
Do it. If nothing else I ever
suggest.

Falstaff rises and exits. Hal percolates Falstaff's advice.

EXT. ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal at the palace gates. Without exchange with the guards, he is
granted entry. All watch him with cold interest if not disdain.

INT. ANTECHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal walks the hall under escort. As he approaches the antechamber he crosses paths with Grey and Cambridge on their way into the great hall. Grey eyes him with contempt. Cambridge looks at him cautiously, searching.

William approaches Hal with something more like compassion. He genuflects subtly.

WILLIAM

My lord. Your father expects you.

HAL

He shouldn't.

William observes Hal's state of dishevelment.

INT. GREAT HALL / ROYAL COURT - DAY

King Henry is in his chair, visibly weak, presiding over a sitting of parliament. The full court plus THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY and clerical attendants are there.

THOMAS OF LANCASTER, the King's 18 year-old son, Hal's younger brother, is there too.

The Archbishop is addressing the king. He's bumptious, but nervous, and has a lisp.

ARCHBISHOP

Never. Never would I dare doubt
Your Majesty's piety, however I
would remind you of the service we -

HENRY IV

Archbishop, I would have thought
our lord above would want us all to
share in his bounty.

ARCHBISHOP

My liege, while I see the strain
your treasury is under, I can not
help but wonder if the canker of
Lollardy be somehow at the root of
this suggestion, that I - or rather
the *church* - be burdened with a tax
to relieve problems that are not of
the church's making.

WILLIAM

Your Highness.

The King looks up. Others turn also as Hal steps into the room.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Henry, Prince of Wales.

HENRY IV
My son. Come to me.

The Archbishop appears put out. He regards Hal with derision.

Hal crosses the room. He bows before his father, taking in his frailty. Henry takes in his son's slovenliness.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)
Come closer.

Hal takes a step closer. Henry watches him a moment.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)
I feel my life is nearing its
natural end and yet still even I
must appear of ruder health than
you.

Hal doesn't respond. He continues looking his father in the eye.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)
The time has come for me to
consider the issue of my
succession. You will not be king.

Hal remains fixed. A barely concealed smirk on the face of Grey.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)
While you are my eldest son, for
reasons that must be evident to
you, that are on display for all
here to see and smell, you will not
inherit this crown.

HAL
Nor have I sought it.

HENRY IV
That privilege and responsibility will
instead fall to your brother Thomas.

Thomas straightens, postures regally. It doesn't suit him.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

As you may be aware - to whatever degree you are aware of the world outside your own - I will assume you are aware that the kingdom is at war with itself. Matters as grave as these require leadership committed to their resolution and you - of this I am sure - you can not provide that commitment. Thomas, however, can. He is soft, but he is eager and he will lead my army against the newly treasonous Percy Hotspur.

Hal looks at Thomas who has trouble meeting Hal's eyes.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)

I will assume this news comes to you as neither surprise nor disappointment. I do however see it as my duty as King and as father to say it to you directly.

Hal walks to Thomas. Thomas raises his head, holds Hal's eyes.

HAL

How do you feel, brother?

THOMAS

Strong.

HAL

When do you fight?

THOMAS

I set off tomorrow. We fight by week's end.

HAL

You need not fight. These feuds need not be yours.

Hal takes Thomas's face in his hand. Thomas leans his head away and tries to stare at Hal. He is young and afraid.

HENRY IV

I have said what you were summonsed to hear. Leave us now.

Hal turns to his father, one last cold look, then leaves.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - NIGHT

Slow-motion: Falstaff is drunk, dancing in women's clothing, owning the room with his sweaty heft. Other drinkers laugh.

Hal sits in the corner, oblivious and darkly contemplative.

EXT. FIELD / ENGLAND - MORNING

A foggy field. Men in armour, horses, an air of trepidation.

Thomas is helped into his breastplate by an ARMOURER. He's nervous. He raises his arm as a strap is tightened. A CAPTAIN waits nearby.

THOMAS
(pained)
Is it not too tight?

ARMOURER
It has been made to the
measurements I was given, sire.

THOMAS
May be you were given the wrong
ones. It feels tight. I can barely
turn.

ARMOURER
It is to be worn tight, sire.

Thomas steps away like he's trying on new shoes. He seems awkward in his heavy suit, overwhelmed by it. He walks among men nearby. He smiles wanly. The men regard him with uncertainty.

THOMAS'S CAPTAIN
My lord, we must meet with your
marshals. As the sun rises, the day
will unfold. We must complete our
preparations.

THOMAS
Of course.

EXT. TENTS / FIELD / ENGLAND - MORNING

Thomas enters the circle of seated men awaiting him. They bow their heads, but clearly doubt his skill and experience and worry about their own fate as a consequence.

THOMAS

Lord Dorset, are your men ready for the day?

DORSET

They are, sire.

THOMAS

Very good.

(awkward beat)

Tell me of your preparations.

- and then a commotion from beyond the tents.

Hal approaches slowly on horseback. A lone muscular figure.

A hush descends. To most here, Hal is an almost mythical figure - the renegade son of their tyrannical king.

He dismounts. He walks to Thomas. The crowd parts for him. He looks sharp, determined, steely.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Why are you here?

HAL

I will not allow this havoc to transpire. I have come to see it stopped.

THOMAS

This is my battle. You have no place here.

HAL

If I have my way there will be no battle.

Hal turns to a HERALD nearby.

HAL (CONT'D)

You. Come here.

THOMAS

You have no place here.

HAL

(to herald)

Go to the rebel camp and deliver this message to Percy Hotspur. Tell him that Prince Henry challenges him to settle today's score man on man. He and I. We fight in our armies' places.

THOMAS

I do not need you to fight my battles.

HAL

This battle is not yours.

The herald hasn't moved, confused. Hal steps towards him.

HAL (CONT'D)

Why have you not moved? Go!

The herald scurries away. Dorset rises from the circle.

DORSET

Who do you think you are?

HAL

I am nobody to you. As you are nobody to me.

As Hal walks away, he watches the herald's horse gallop across the field toward the rebel camp.

INT. TENT / REBEL CAMP / ENGLAND - MORNING

Hotspur stands. Northumberland sits. Scrope is there, having defected from the King's inner circle.

HOTSPUR

I will fight him. I will defeat him.

NORTHUMBERLAND

That you surely would, my son.

HOTSPUR

I will defeat him and we can leave this field whole and victorious.

SCROPE

That thrill of victory you so foresee would be short lived, for there is little chance that the King Henry would allow us walk free from this field. He would have us forever marked as traitors and we would spend the rest of our days awaiting his recrimination.

HOTSPUR

The offer has been made.

SCROPE

The *Prince* Henry speaks not for his father. Of this I am certain. You have started something, we have started something much larger here, and we must see it properly concluded.

NORTHUMBERLAND

You're eager to fight, my son. And you will. And we shall fight alongside you. We will burn them. We will burn Henry's reign to the ground.

EXT. TENTS / FIELD / ENGLAND - MORNING

Hal is fitting himself with armour. He does so solemnly and meticulously. These may be his last moments alive.

Thomas approaches him, furious.

THOMAS

It is unconscionable that you should seek to commandeer this moment of mine. This moment belongs to me.

HAL

This is not a battle you should be compelled to fight. These troubles are not of your making.

THOMAS

This is not for you to decide! This is not your place!

HAL

You do not know war, Thomas.

THOMAS

I do know war.

HAL

You do not. You may have skirted its perimeter, but you have not been inside it such as that which brews here on this field. And this here is not a place any sane or good man should aspire to know.

Hal looks at Thomas, hoping he can see his sincere concern.

HAL (CONT'D)

You have been recruited to our father's madness, to wars that need not be fought. When I turned my back on him, on my birthright, I was turning my back on this field. These men are not our enemies, but our father has made them thus.

THOMAS

Why then are you here? You so disapprove of our cause, and yet still you find it necessary to upstage me?

HAL

I do this not to steal your thunder, brother. I do it to save your life.

THOMAS

These are not your decisions to make!

Westmorland approaches. John turns, agitated.

WESTMORLAND

Pardon me, my lords.

THOMAS

What is it?

WESTMORLAND

Our herald is returned from the rebel camp. They have refused Prince Henry's offer.

Thomas is stunned silent.

EXT. FIELD / ENGLAND - DAY

A line of two thousand men and horses - a battle-ready army. Far across the field, the thin line of Hotspur's force is visible.

Thomas strides to Dorset and other officers. All is quiet.

DORSET

You should address the men, my lord
- as is customary.

THOMAS

Of course.

Thomas looks around at the mass of men before him. They watch him. He clears his throat.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Men. This day shall be a glorious one. It shall be a day that will live on in our memories for many years to come.

Beat. Thomas looks nervously at the men staring back him, cold, distrustful. His pause is awkward, long. He continues weakly.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Battles such as this one are the pillars upon which a man's life is built.

Thomas stops. A murmuring from the men. Dorset leans in close.

DORSET

You must speak up, sire. The men are having difficulty hearing you.

Thomas is rattled, embarrassed. He steels himself and then, loudly, yelling uncomfortably -

THOMAS

I know that many of you doubt me. I know many of you think me unworthy of your respect. But I promise you that today, from this moment, I will do everything in my power to make myself worthy of your respect.

Awkward silence. The men wait for more. None comes.

EXT. REBEL CAMP / ENGLAND - DAY

Rebel preparations. Hotspur is now in formidable knight's armour, elaborate and fearsome. He seems troubled. He dons his helmet and mounts his horse, also decked in intimidating armour. Together they look powerfully murderous.

Hotspur looks around the camp a moment, breathing deep behind his visor. He then spurs his horse hard and gallops away across the field towards the English army. Startled attendants call after him.

EXT. FIELD / ENGLAND - DAY

Thomas stands weak before his men.

OFFICER

Loke! There!

All turn to see Hotspur's lone, sharp approach across the field.

Hotspur rides steadily towards Thomas's army. As he nears, he slows, then stops close to the line. He removes his helmet.

HOTSPUR

Where is Henry? I have come to
fight him, in our armies' stead.

Thomas steps forward, distressed and angry.

THOMAS

No. His offer was refused. We are
ready.

HOTSPUR

The offer has been reconsidered. I
will fight Henry. The outcome of
that fight shall stand for the
larger battle forestalled. It will
be done.

Hotspur dismounts his horse.

THOMAS

I said no. It will not be done.

Hotspur walks closer.

HOTSPUR

Why is the little dog barking?
Where be the big dog?

Hal steps forward, helmet under his arm, sword by his side.

HAL

It will be done.

THOMAS

No!

HAL

If this here might prevent the
death of countless of your men then
you should wish it be done. You
should wish it be done!

Thomas can feel the heavy stare of men who would rather not die, many of whom are themselves unsure of this battle's aim. Hal watches him a moment, then steps further towards Hotspur.

HOTSPUR

And here I am with the whoring fool.

HAL

This fight need not be had, Percy. My father will soon be dead, and your grievances will die with him.

HOTSPUR

Don't be afraid of our small contest, little Hal. I promise to finish it quickly.

Hotspur dons his helmet. Hal watches him.

Hal dons his own helmet. He stands firm, raises his sword. Hotspur advances, calmly. Hal circles him.

HOTSPUR (CONT'D)

Your father is plague to England.

Hal charges forward, swinging his sword.

Hotspur blocks and deflects him easily. Hal stumbles.

Hotspur stands calm and cocksure as Hal regathers.

HOTSPUR (CONT'D)

Come for me, big dog.

Hal attacks again, this time steadier, more sure-footed.

They trade blows. Hotspur is a powerful and battle-fit warrior.

Hal seems more troubled by the contest, struggling to keep his feet and trade blows.

They fight, separate and circle each other.

Despite his ascendancy, Hotspur seems surprised by the fight Hal puts up. He expected the win to be easier. He concentrates hard.

Northumberland and Scrope have arrived on horseback from the rebel camp. They watch the fight.

Another vicious exchange. The men break. They watch each other, catching breath.

They circle one another.

HOTSPUR (CONT'D)
Come for me again, dog.

Hal raises his sword and stands firm and waits. Hotspur fixes coldly on him, then charges. The exchange is brutal. Hal loses his sword. He stands vulnerable. He pulls his dagger from its scabbard.

Hotspur laughs from behind his visor, then charges again.

Hal ducks, spins. Hotspur trips and falls. Hal wheels around and thrusts his dagger straight through Hotspur's throat.

Hotspur is killed. Hal stands over him, heaving for breath.

The massed English army bearing witness stand silent, shocked, relieved, confused - certainly they didn't want to die, but many felt a greater allegiance to Hotspur than they did the family they were to fight for today.

Hal pulls off his helmet. He tosses it on the dirt. He bends and lifts Hotspur's helmet off. He contemplates Hotspur's lifeless face. He seems saddened by it.

Hal carries Hotspur's helmet over to Thomas. All watch, silent.

He drops the helmet at Thomas's feet.

HAL
Some day this will be *your* head,
dropped at the feet of a man who
might otherwise have been your
brother. Walk away from this field.

THOMAS
After you have stolen its prized
scalp? This is what shall be spoken
of tomorrow. This field was mine,
it was to mark my dominion. Instead
now it marks only this head. This
fucking head.

Thomas kicks Hotspur's helmet like a football and walks away through the crowd.

21 **INT. BEDROOM / TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - NIGHT**

21

Falstaff is asleep in bed snoring. A knock at the door. The door opens - it's hostess Hooper.

FALSTAFF
Go away.

HOOPER

You might wish to see to your
otherwise well appointed friend. He
seems to have taken a pitiful turn.

22 **EXT. STREET / EASTCHEAP - MOMENTS LATER**

22

Falstaff steps into the dark, quiet street to find Beale trying to rouse Hal who lies drunk and sick against a wall.

BEALE

Hal's up-chucked again.

Falstaff crouches before Hal. Beale steps away.

FALSTAFF

Hello, friend. What's this foul
mess you've chosen to lie in?

23 **INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - LATER**

23

The tavern has emptied. Hal sits against a wall with a sick bucket. Falstaff sits beside him, staring ahead.

FALSTAFF

Battle is ugly, brother. Many times
have I seen men in your state. I've
been in it many times over myself.
For all our rejoice of courage and
valour, nothing stains the soul
more indelibly than killing. Never
have I felt more vile than standing
victorious on a battlefield... The
thrill of victory fades quickly.
What lingers long after is always
ugly. Nothingness... Ugly.

Falstaff sits remembering war. He shudders, shakes it off.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Never again, I say.

HAL

Stop. Stop talking, old man.

Falstaff smiles and pats Hal on the shoulder.

FALSTAFF

I will never stop talking, Hal.

Falstaff stands and heads for the stairs.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - MORNING

Hal is asleep on the floor. A gloved hand shakes his shoulder.

VOICE

My lord.

Hal wakes. William stands over him, accompanied by a guard.

HAL

What business?

WILLIAM

It is a matter of great urgency.

HAL

You should hurry along then.

WILLIAM

Please, my lord.

Hal sits up. It's a struggle. His head is throbbing.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Your father, my lord. He is gravely ill.

HAL

That hook has lost its worm.

Hal massages his temples. William addresses his guard.

WILLIAM

Wait for me outside.

The guard exits. William sits on a bench beside Hal.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

England needs a king.

HAL

England may do better without one.

WILLIAM

No doubt your father has brought much trouble to this kingdom, but I fear the chaos that might erupt in his absence. England needs a king and I suspect those sentiments of yours that had you resile from him might be precisely those the governance of this land needs... You must be king.

HAL

Why do you say this to *me*? Speak to Thomas. Is he not to be your new king?

WILLIAM

I'm afraid that is not possible, my lord.

William pauses. Hal looks at him, suddenly concerned.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Your brother was killed in Wales not a week gone by... After your defeat of Lord Percy, young Thomas pressed on to the western fields. This is where he met his end.

The news rocks Hal.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

It is said he gave valiant account of himself.

Hal stands and heads for the door. William watches Hal's exit.

OMITTED

EXT. ROYAL COURT - DAY

26

Hal's booming voice echoes off the stone walls of the palace.

HAL (O.S.)

Where are you!?

INT. KITCHEN / ROYAL COURT - CONTINUOUS

Attendants hard at work in the smoky, bustling kitchen look up at the noise.

HAL (O.S.)

Where are you!?

INT. GREAT HALL / ROYAL COURT - CONTINUOUS

Palace attendants moving furniture in the otherwise empty hall are also startled by the noise.

HAL (O.S.)

Where is he?!

INT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - CONTINUOUS

Hal strides into his father's office adjacent to his bedchamber.

HAL

Where is he? Where is the monster?

In the office, Grey and others loiter. Grey turns to Hal.

GREY

Tis a grave day, my lord.

Hal swings him to the wall.

HAL

Is it? Truly? The vultures show the way to the carcass.

Hal releases him and bursts through the door.

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal charges in. Cambridge, Dorset, Westmorland and others sit quietly. The LORD CHAMBERLAIN is there. The Archbishop sits beside the bed.

HAL

Move. Leave him.

ARCHBISHOP

The King needs rest.

HAL

Soon he will have it.

The King lies prone in bed, breathing shallow, face contorted.

ARCHBISHOP

He's dying.

HAL

Leave then. It's too late for you.

ARCHBISHOP

I give him comfort -

HAL

(yelling furiously)
Get away!

The Archbishop backs away, scurries for the door.

Hal grabs the sheets from the bed and pulls them off. He stands over his dying father, shrivelled and exposed on the bed.

HAL (CONT'D)
You deserve no comfort.

The King struggles for breath, wracked with fear. He is crying.

HAL (CONT'D)
Do you feel the cold?

Hal waits for some kind of response. Henry is distraught.

HAL (CONT'D)
(yells)
Speak! Do you feel this cold?

The King stares into some middle distance, broken and childlike.

HAL (CONT'D)
Speak.

Hal starts crying now. And then his anger rises again.

HAL (CONT'D)
Speak, wretch. Speak to me.

Courtiers sit quietly, cautious. The King whimpers.

HENRY IV
(barely intelligible)
You must be king, my son. Please. I
love you.

Hal takes this in. His tears run harder. The King wheezes.

HENRY IV (CONT'D)
I know not what I have done.

He continues to wheeze as he fades. Hal looks to the crown sitting on a beside table. He stares at it.

Others in the room wait uncomfortably, staring at Hal's back.

Hal stands. He turns. All stoop apprehensively to a knee.

ALL
My liege.

Hal stands before them.

HAL
Look at me.

The men look up. He looks them all square. He has hardened.

HAL (CONT'D)
He will be dead by morning.

No one breathes. Hal watches them - his world shifting.

HAL (CONT'D)
You know not what will become of
you.
(beat)
And so I offer you now the most
blessed reprieve and the most
dreadful misery - one and same -
that you shall suffer the indignity
of serving me, the wayward son you
so revile.

Hal stares them down.

HAL (CONT'D)
But know now that you will be
watched over by an altogether
different king.

Pause. The men genuflect again.

HAL (CONT'D)
Before you falsely honour your new
king, you might with fondness
farewell your old.

Hal catches sight of William, newly arrived.

OMITTED

EXT. STREET / EASTCHEAP - DAY

William and the Lord Chamberlain with three guards in the street outside Hal's apartment. William surveys the street, then heads inside it.

INT. APARTMENT / EASTCHEAP - DAY

A key in the door. It swings open. The Lord Chamberlain, William and two guards enter to find Falstaff startled awake and disoriented in Hal's bed.

FALSTAFF
What is this?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
Who are you?

FALSTAFF
I am I. Who are you?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
What is your purpose here?

FALSTAFF
I think you just woke me up from it,
didn't you?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
Rise from that bed. At once.

FALSTAFF
Who are you? Where is Hal?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
These lodgings and their contents
are the property of the King of
England. You are trespassing and I
order you to vacate at once.

Falstaff is momentarily taken aback. He scoffs.

FALSTAFF
What King of England?

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Dressers fit Hal in ceremonial robes. William sits watching. The Lord Chamberlain is there too, at attention.

WILLIAM
Are you comfortable?

Hal adjusts his garments. He isn't comfortable.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
You need only follow the
Archbishop's lead. A coronation is
one such event at which the King
need be little more than present.
And awake, I suppose.
(beat)
Many hours might this day consume
but, like any other, it will end.
You are an honourable man. You will
not be alone in your endeavours. I
can assure you of this. You shall
have me beside you at every turn.

EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

Hal walks barefoot in ceremonial procession through a crowd of noble onlookers. William, Dorset and Westmorland are with him. The Archbishop leads. Hal seems vulnerable. The crowd watches with quiet reserve. He may have inherited the kingdom, but it feels today as though the kingdom owns him.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

The abbey is huge and full of peers and nobility, watching -

Hal on all fours on the chancel, disrobed, wearing only breeches. The Archbishop stands over him, massaging oils into his arms, back and shoulders. Hal seems vulnerable, submitting to the arcane, unsettling, almost sexual ceremony.

Bishops bear witness. The crowd watches in silence.

LATER: Hal, clothed in full regal attire, sits on a throne by the altar. The Archbishop addresses the large crowd.

ARCHBISHOP

Will ye, sirs, at this time give
your wills and assents to this
consecration whereunto the people
shall say with a great voice, yea,
yea, yea, so be it, King Henry,
King Henry, King Henry!

CROWD

King Henry! King Henry! King Henry!

The crown of Saint Edward is placed upon Hal's head. In procession, he is kissed by each of the bishops as he stares out at his inscrutable subjects.

INT. GREAT HALL / ROYAL COURT - NIGHT

Hal stands at a huge banquet table, flanked by William, the Duke of York, Dorset, Westmorland, Grey and Cambridge. A few seats from Hal sits the Archbishop. In all, forty or more. Dukes and duchesses. Men of church, war and politics - and, beside some of these men, women sit watching the new king carefully.

Among them is QUEEN PHILIPPA, Hal's 21 year-old sister, who - in marriage - is now Queen of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. She sits beside her husband, ERIC OF POMERANIA.

Laid out on a side-table near Hal is a great pile of gifts. Servants remove plates from the table. A meal has been eaten.

The Lord Chamberlain presents one of the gifts to Hal.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
From Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia.

Hal opens the box and pulls out an ornate vase. He inspects it.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)
(reading from a card)
'I, King Wenceslaus of Bohemia,
present this gift to King Henry of
England. To long and good health.'

HAL
Beautiful.

Hal looks to Philippa. He walks round the table to her.

HAL (CONT'D)
As I'm sure you all know, my young
sister Philippa has joined us here
today. Queen of Denmark!

Hal stands behind her. He lovingly holds her shoulder.

HAL (CONT'D)
I am thankful that she and her
husband, the good King Eric, have
travelled all this way to wish me
well. To wish England well.
(to Eric)
How stands she, Eric? As queen? I
hope nobly.

ERIC
Well she stands, Your Majesty.

HAL
I'm happy to hear it. I wish for
you take this vase, my dear. Let
its beauty stand for your beauty
which stands in turn for England's
beauty.

Hal puts the vase on the table before Philippa and kisses her
cheek. She smiles.

PHILIPPA
I thank you, my liege.

Hal returns to his seat.

HAL
The next surprise, Lord Chamberlain.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
 From Zsigmond, King of Hungary.
 (reading card)
 'May your reign be peaceful and
 your kingdom eternally prosperous.'

Another box. Hal opens it. Inside is a quill and ink pot. Hal inspects it.

HAL
 A quill. A nice one.
 (to William)
 I feel you should have this gift,
 Chief Justice, for the signing of
 royal decree. Let it represent
 England's lawfulness.

WILLIAM
 Thank you, my liege.

All at the table enjoy this display of largesse from Hal. All are smiling, awaiting the next surprise.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
 His sincerity, the Doge, and the
 republic of Venice, present this
 gift in your honour, my liege.

Hal inspects the box, trying to figure out how it opens.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)
 (reading the gift letter)
 It says it is a bird from
 Constantinople.

HAL
 A bird! A dead one I should suppose
 if it has travelled here from
 Constantinople by Venezia in this
 box.

Laughter at the table. Hal manages to open the box. Inside is a small, intricately crafted metal bird.

Hal studies it.

WILLIAM
 If I may, my liege.

Hal hands the bird to William. William inspects its underside and twists a dial there. He places the bird down on the table upon which it flaps its wings like the wind-up toy it is.

All at the table gasp, enthralled, horrified, watching the bird twist and flap. They've never seen anything like it.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Unnatural mechanics from the edge
of Christendom.

Hal watches the bird with fascination as it comes to a stop. He picks it up, turns it over, inspects its underside.

HAL
A wonder... Well, this belongs to
my old friend, Lord Cambridge.

Hal walks around the table to Cambridge's seat. He puts the bird on the table before him and clasps him by the shoulders.

HAL (CONT'D)
Of all at this table, none have I
known longer than I have you. I
have indeed known you longer than I
have my own young sister.

Hal smiles at Philippa. She smiles back carefully. Hal returns his attention to Cambridge.

HAL (CONT'D)
We were raised together. We played
games together. We have fought in
battle together. You have been like
an older brother to me. And so, in
honour of this, I think it only
fitting that you, my good Lord
Cambridge, should have this magical
bird from Constantinople. Let's
hope its magic isn't black and
unholy! Constantinople indeed.

Hal kisses Cambridge's temple as all laugh and applaud. Hal returns to his seat as Cambridge inspects his new toy.

HAL (CONT'D)
More!

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
From Charles, King of France.

The Lord Chamberlain inspects the card.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)
Pardon me. Not from the King. It's
from the Prince, his son. The
Dauphin.

The Lord Chamberlain turns the card over.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)
No message.

HAL
No message from the Dauphin?

Hal puts the small chest on the table before him. He opens it and freezes, staring into the box.

All wait in anticipation. They sense something wrong.

Hal reaches into the box and pulls out an old-style tennis ball.

HAL (CONT'D)
A ball.

Silence. This is clearly an insult to the new king.

HAL (CONT'D)
There is no accompanying message?

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
No, my liege.

Hal continues looking at the ball. He closes the chest.

HAL
I shall keep this gift. This one is sent for me.

He examines the ball, turns it in his hand.

HAL (CONT'D)
For the boy that once I was.

Hal steps back from the table and throws the ball hard against the stone wall. It echoes loud and bounces back to him.

HAL (CONT'D)
The Prince and I might play a set one day.
(to Cambridge)
You shouldn't mind, Lord Cambridge, if I found myself a new play friend, would you? For jeu de paume?

Muted laughter. Cambridge smiles politely. The women - Hal's sister, Philippa, especially - watch Hal closely.

HAL (CONT'D)
 Lord Chamberlain. Next. Make this
 one a good one, please.

We hold on Hal as the Lord Chamberlain sorts uncomfortably
 through the remaining gifts.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
 From The King of Denmark, Eric of
 Pomerania -

HAL
 (flat)
 Ah, good Eric. I was hoping yours
 might be next.

As the Lord Chamberlain reads the card, Hal becomes distant.

INT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal sits at the King's desk, examining a mess of papers.
 William sits, unsettled, holding the Dauphin's ball.

WILLIAM
 We must respond. This ball is an
 insult, to you and to your kingdom.

HAL
 Remember where, as Prince, I whiled
 and how I spent my days.

WILLIAM
 You spent them in considered
 privation.

HAL
 And drinking. Drinking and
 clowning. So is there not some
 truth in this jest? If the Dauphin
 wants from me a paroxysm, why give
 it him?

WILLIAM
 It would not be a show of foul
 temper for you to respond
 forcefully to an insult such as
 this, my liege. It would be a show
 of strength.

HAL
 I appreciate your umbrage, William.
 And your loyalty.
 (MORE)

HAL (CONT'D)

But my strength does not lie in me
flapping up and down at the
slightest barb like some unholy
mechanical bird.

Hal focusses on the papers spread before him. William sits beside him, waiting. Hal stops, rubs his eyes.

HAL (CONT'D)

(re the papers)

Make sense of *this*. This is what is
pressing.

WILLIAM

It's most complicated, my liege.
Civil strife has consumed us. War
drains the purse like little else.

HAL

This strife must end. And it will
end by conciliation. We shall
pardon our adversaries, Lord Scrope
among them. We shall pay Mortimer's
ransom and have him returned from
Wales. I will write these pardons
in mine own hand. I want it known
these sentiments are so personal to
me. We shall let these men know
they were my father's enemies, not
mine.

WILLIAM

Certainly, my liege.

HAL

(beat)

How does this strategy greet you?

WILLIAM

Great policy shifts are best
enacted with regime change. If this
is how you wish to proceed - and I
will support you in that endeavour
if it be so - then yes, my liege,
now would be the time to do it.

EXT. GARDEN / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal is with his sister, Philippa, in the palace gardens. They stand at the fence of a pen holding two Bactrian camels. Philippa is enchanted. She's never seen anything like them.

Behind them, at respectful distance, attendants hover - some armed. Hal throws a stick for two dogs to fetch.

Philippa is smiling. Their talk has been light and tender.

PHILIPPA

He is kind to me. I'm happy there.
I am yet to give him a child, but
he seems not to mind.

HAL

He is a good man. And you are
young.

PHILIPPA

Did you reconcile with our father
before his passing?

HAL

There was no reconciliation to be
had. His passing itself was my
reconciliation. He did untold harm
to this kingdom. His passing will
bring calm with it.

PHILIPPA

I ask not after the kingdom. What
of *you*?

HAL

I want an end to this unrest.

Beat. He hasn't answered her question.

PHILIPPA

I look around that table last
night. I look at the faces of the
men seated at it. And I can feel
this calm of which you speak. I can
see the... the *hope* that your
vitality, and your measure,
promises them. I do believe they
wish you well.

(beat)

But I also see that they have their
own kingdoms - behind their eyes...
Do you understand what I say?

Hal looks at her.

PHILIPPA (CONT'D)

These men are more than mere empty
vassels awaiting your instruction.

Hal looks away. She searches his face, trying to read it.

PHILIPPA (CONT'D)

I know them not. I've been away too many years. And I'm now to return to Denmark. But I have in my time in *that* court been privy to its commissions. I have seen there, again and again, that no one ever speaks true - *wholly* true. Even when their intentions are virtuous, and their hopes for the realm are honourable, they are still first and foremost the sovereigns of their *own* kingdoms - the kingdoms of their own imagining.

Hal's shoe's buckle has come loose. He crouches to re-fasten it. Philippa stands over him. She looks at him sadly.

PHILIPPA (CONT'D)

Choose your steps wisely, dear brother. Tis likely not my place to offer you counsel. But that *is* my counsel nonetheless. Abstract as it may be.

Hal looks up as Philippa wanders away. Hal watches her, suddenly feeling strangely alone.

SCENE MOVED TO 44A

OMITTED

INT. GREAT HALL / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Full sitting of parliament. The Archbishop has set up an easel for a presentation. On it is an incomprehensibly complicated genealogical diagram. He has performance jitters.

All are assembled. When Hal enters with William, all stand.

HAL

Archbishop, a presentation I'm told. A performance.

The Archbishop bows. Hal sits.

ARCHBISHOP

Yes, my liege. Please, make yourself comfortable.

HAL

Comfortable. How long is this performance to be?

Awkward pause. The Archbishop isn't good at playful banter.

ARCHBISHOP

I speak to King Charles of France's claim to be the legitimate sovereign ruler of said lands. Tis -
 (trying to control lisp)
 Tis said that the law Salic would have no succession of the French crown fall to a woman. Meaning no rule left in the lineage of the female shall by rights pass to her issue. The French have long stripped such titles in favour of another whence the title was in fact left in the female thread in the absence or death of a male heir. Now, the law Salic which is of Salic land and tethered to said lands is not, ah, not therefore legally bound - or adherent at all in fact - to the lands of France... But to those of Salic. Which, as you know, lies between the lands of Elba and of Salve. I claim here, with proof, that hence it follows that the law Salic which has seen French sovereignty stolen as such from a true lineage... Thrice, as I can illuminate, the French have cited the law Salic as reason to bar a female succession -

HAL

With reverence?

ARCHBISHOP

Yes, my liege?

HAL

You have yet to introduce your extraordinary puzzle picture there and already I'm finding this story impossible to follow.

ARCHBISHOP

My liege, I question the French King's claim to the throne upon which he sits.

HAL

Is that so? What confuses me now is
why you are telling me this story.

The Archbishop, flummoxed, looks to others for support.

HAL (CONT'D)

Archbishop? I'm sorry. Have I
muddled you?

ARCHBISHOP

My liege, I simply hope to bolster
your claim to France should the
need to meet her with force soon
arise.

Beat. Hal is unsettled by talk of war.

HAL

And you believe that need will
indeed soon arise?

ARCHBISHOP

I, ah, my liege - by way of
preparedness, I think it, I believe
it always wise -

HAL

Preparedness? If we are to war with
France, it will be driven by
matters hot and current. I thank
you for your performance. I'm sorry
to cut it short. But war will not
come as a consequence of old and
impenetrable libretto.

ARCHBISHOP

France was your father's long held
ambition. Had he not been bogged in
civil feud he would most surely
have taken the fight to her. And
then on to Jerusalem.

HAL

Jerusalem! We're all the way to
Holy Land, are we? And to sack the
rest of Christendom along the way,
I presume!

Beat.

ARCHBISHOP

My liege -

HAL

I am not my father, Archbishop. I would have thought this clear by now.

(beat, steely)

Do not think me a sapling, gentlemen. Do not think I might bend to light wind. Only with a storm will I uproot. Until then... Well acted.

Hal stands and leaves. The Archbishop looks stung.

EXT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal sits in an armchair, contemplative. William sits nearby.

WILLIAM

The Archbishop is a far from gifted orator.

HAL

Which is strange given I would have thought gifted oratory to be a requirement of the position. Why is the Archbishop speaking to me of war with France?

WILLIAM

What you are witnessing here is a stirring. Of which we must be wary. I applaud your restraint, my liege. After so many years of strife, you are proving to be more than your father's son. And this is admirable. And sage. You wish to be a king for the people. We must ensure to that end, however, that you do not remain oblivious to the mood of the people.

HAL

And what mood is this?

WILLIAM

That France is taunting us.

HAL

Do you share this mood?

WILLIAM

My opinion matters not. My loyalty is to you, my liege. Unwavering.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I stand by you. The mood is a fantasy. That doesn't mean it isn't felt true.

EXT. EASTCHEAP - DAY

Falstaff is squatted, doing a shit on the edge of a stink-pile on the street. He has his garments bunched and is having to shoo away a persistent scavenging dog.

He finishes, pulls up his breeches, and joins Beale waiting nearby. They walk. The street is busy and filthy as usual.

FALSTAFF

Why in heavens a dog would want to eat my shit I cannot fathom. Why would it not eat its own shit if it has such a taste for shit? If only I had a taste for my own shit. I'd need never search for food again.

BEALE

Dogs do eat their own shit. I seen them do it.

FALSTAFF

Mine *would* be a higher order of it. If I was a shit-eating mongrel cur I s'pose I'd too want a steaming hot plate of Sir John's blogs.

Beale has noticed that Falstaff is walking with purpose in a very particular direction.

BEALE

We can't be going to Hooper's.

FALSTAFF

Yes we can.

BEALE

She won't have you.

FALSTAFF

Yes she will.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - DAY

Falstaff and Beale enter the tavern. It's busy despite the morning hour. Falstaff attempts to slink in unnoticed. He makes it half way across the room before he is.

HOOPER
No!

FALSTAFF
Yes!

Hooper makes her way across the room to him as he takes a seat at a table with other men.

HOOPER
No.

FALSTAFF
Yes.

HOOPER
You're not welcome here. Unless you've come to pay what you owe me.

FALSTAFF
I've paid you.

HOOPER
You've paid me a snatch of what you owe. And I presume too from the proceeds of thieving.

FALSTAFF
Lies.

HOOPER
And so, by all account, you be not specially good at thieving neither.

FALSTAFF
Lies. How dare you so address me. Why would you be so churlish with the very man most likely to lift you from this stinking rat-hole? Maybe you've forgot, but my associations now stretch to the highest reaches of the realm. Your insolence might as well be directed to the King himself. Ponder that now.

HOOPER
Are you speaking of Hal?

Falstaff, haughty, pretends the question is beneath him.

HOOPER (CONT'D)
Where is he? Where is Hal? Where is our King?

(MORE)

HOOPER (CONT'D)

He be gone weeks and weeks now.
Where is he? I would say you be the
one who's been forgot. I would say
your dalliance with the upper
reaches of the realm were short-
lived in and around his stinking
sick bucket. Seems you were little
more than passing keeper of a
prince's puke. Ponder that now.

Men at the table laugh. Falstaff is embarrassed.

BEALE

Nell, Sir John is down on his luck.

FALSTAFF

I am not.

HOOPER

You find someone to pay your way
here. I'll not be paying it for you.

Hooper walks away, leaving Falstaff embarrassed.

INT. HALLWAY TO DUNGEON / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal walks at pace with two sentries. They head down a spiral
stair, past guards, into a dark and dank corner of the
palace. A buzz in the air. Hal is concerned.

INT. DUNGEON / ROYAL COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Hal is led into the dungeon. Guards loiter. William is there.

William looks to the guards. They exit. Hal sits opposite
GILRICH (20), an effete Frenchman in chains. [Hal and Gilrich
will speak to each other in French, subtitled.]

HAL

Who are you?

The man says nothing. He looks to William.

WILLIAM

He seeks asylum in return for his
tale.

HAL

I do not doubt this can be
arranged.

GILRICH

Can it or not? You are the King,
no?

Beat. Gilrich and Hal size each other up.

HAL

It can be arranged.

GILRICH

I have been sent by the King of
France to assassinate you.

HAL

Charles himself sent you? You know
this to be certain?

GILRICH

The order's origin I know, yes.
From the King.

HAL

What was the order?

GILRICH

That I should kill the King of
England.

HAL

How?

GILRICH

However. Any way. How many ways to
kill a man. Tis my talent - killing
men who do not expect to be killed.

Hal contemplates his prospective killer.

HAL

In return for this admission you
seek impunity and sanctuary here in
England.

GILRICH

Oui. Yes.

INT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal with William, Dorset, Cambridge, Grey, Westmorland - and
Scrope, newly returned from his rebel defection.

DORSET

This is an act of war.

SCROPE

The man we have chained now is but a coward. Maybe he was too low paid. Whatever his grievance, he was sent. Which means another may come. And I fear the next may be of firmer mettle than the weasel that nests in the dungeon beneath our feet.

HAL

At such a time as I endeavour to foster a fresh and peaceful air for this kingdom to breathe, it is not in my interest to stir hostility with another. I would expect you, Lord Scrope, to understand this as well as any other. I have welcomed you back to this court so as to forge quite the opposite of whatever bellicose fever it was that had you turn your arms against it.

Scrope looks at Hal with defiance. He has indeed been welcomed back - only to be shut down. William breaks tension.

WILLIAM

Understand we do, my liege, but - with respect - to ignore such an audacious act of aggression will be seen as weakness. This is no game ball. This is an assassin.

HAL

Would you consider me weak, Chief Justice?

WILLIAM

Certainly not, my liege. No. I see the honour in your intent. I speak more of the kingdom, of what the kingdom sees.

HAL

Of what the kingdom sees. And how, pray, might the kingdom see the weasel beneath our feet?

WILLIAM

That weasel is a pimple. If France's animus towards you runs deep enough for them to send an assassin, then it will be felt in the streets, ours and theirs. It will be known.

Hal feels his leadership tested. The other men wait and watch.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

We share your concerns, my liege. We share your longing for peace. But the stability of peace today needs more than harmony. It needs strength and confidence. These are qualities that can originate only in you, the King. They must be seen - and felt.

Hal looks at William. He thinks. He turns to an attendant.

HAL

Take down these words, addressed to King Charles of France.

Hal takes the ball from the Dauphin's chest. He bounces it once, twice, on his desk.

HAL (CONT'D)

This assassin you send can be taken as nothing other than an infant act of war. If this be your intention, I say you let it be known plainly and honourably and that you desist from the timorous slither in which you presently engage. If it be war you seek, send the full weight of your army, for a lone and cowardly assassin will not topple this King Henry the Fifth of England you so underestimate.

Hal lifts the chest and empties the tennis balls on the floor. He drops the chest back on his desk.

HAL (CONT'D)

Fill this with gun-stones and send it back to France.

INT. GREAT HALL / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal, on his throne. A full sitting of parliament. A speech is being given. Hal, half-listening, searches the faces of the men before him. All inscrutable.

INT. CHAPEL / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal alone, on his knees at the altar, deep in prayer.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

All is ominously still. The sky the colour of blood.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE'S ESTATE - EVENING

A stately manor house in last light. A carriage pulls up outside it. A man alights, looking around warily.

INT. CAMBRIDGE'S ESTATE - EVENING

Cambridge steps into the entrance hall to meet his STEWARD at the front door. Cambridge's children are in the kitchen behind him. There is a wary tension in the air.

CAMBRIDGE

Who is it?

CAMBRIDGE'S STEWARD

A Frenchman, sire. He says he wishes to speak with you privately.

CAMBRIDGE

About what?

CAMBRIDGE'S STEWARD

He wouldn't say, sire. I asked of him. He wouldn't say.

INT. PRIVATE CHAMBERS / CAMBRIDGE'S ESTATE - NIGHT

The man, a French ENVOY, takes a seat in Cambridge's sitting chamber. He waits for the attendant to leave before speaking.

ENVOY

My King has sent me to seek out men he feels he can trust. He believes there is discreet discussion to be had.

CAMBRIDGE

What discussion?

ENVOY

He believes there is discussion to be had about your new King of England.

Cambridge realises he is now in a precarious position.

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. ANTECHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Cambridge and Grey with William in a quiet corner.

CAMBRIDGE

Only myself and Lord Grey were met. We knew not where to turn... about what was spoken to us.

Nervous, he looks to Grey who stands, eager to cut the fuss.

GREY

We are all of us aware that there is a standing problem. Our King is of low repute.

WILLIAM

The French King teaches you this? Is he not thankful for young Henry's light reaction to his provocations? Or does he come on spoiling?

CAMBRIDGE

The assassin he swears he knows not of. Tis a charge he denies.

WILLIAM

The plot came to nought. Of course he would wish to wipe his hands of it.

CAMBRIDGE

Whatever the root, they have expressed grave concern regarding our King's mental fortitude and what it might mean for relations between our kingdoms.

William thinks, watches Cambridge.

CAMBRIDGE (CONT'D)

I myself once counted His Majesty a brother, but, my lord, as you say, much has -

WILLIAM

Is the envoy to be trusted?

CAMBRIDGE

I believe so. As if you yourself were to voyage on Henry's behalf.

WILLIAM

Charles wishes to dethrone our King.

CAMBRIDGE

They have proffered no course of action. They merely wish to establish that their concern is mutually held.

GREY

The issue is not France. This is but a reminder to us of a more general lunacy. A man who but weeks ago was a drunken boor from the sewers of Eastcheap now wears England's crown... What shall become of us? What shall become of us when civil misdeeds are forgiven as if they were but indiscretions? When traitors are invited to rejoin the court as if they had been but away on sojourn? When it appears -

WILLIAM

Yes. These concerns are current and numerous. Something must be done... And something *will* be done.

INT. WILLIAM'S CHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal is seated. William stands beside his desk.

WILLIAM

Thus is the King's burden. A king must make decisions lesser men are neither willing nor able to make. A king is indeed presented with quandaries lesser men might never encounter in the course of their whole lives.

Hal drops his head, stares at the floor.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I wish it were not so. But problems, my liege - this is my experience - problems left unattended have a habit of becoming crises. You have a chance here to unite this land truly. You have refreshed its mood with promise. But promise must be fulfilled. Promise can never be an end in itself.

Pause, Hal looking at the floor, thinking.

HAL

One does not secure the integrity of his house by ignoring the woodworm...

(looks up at William)

Nor by attempting to make peace with it.

INT. GREAT HALL / ROYAL COURT - DAY

The full court gathered, chatting casually. William on edge.

Hal enters, steely. The men go silent as they notice him.

HAL

As of this day we are at war with France.

Stunned silence. Grey and Cambridge shuffle nervously.

HAL (CONT'D)

Twice I have given her the benefit of my doubt. Once as a trifling joust which I paid. The second I met with messengered caution. This third will not be left unchecked.

DORSET

(beat, cautious)

What be this latest provocation to
arouse thy fury, my liege?

HAL

And so in order to flush these
French rats from their nests, I
will have it communicated to them
that we are now at war.

Hal stares strangely at the men.

HAL (CONT'D)

And who do we propose might deliver
this declaration? An envoy. A man
or men of high standing.

Hal steps directly to Cambridge and Grey.

HAL (CONT'D)

Lords Grey and Cambridge. I would
ask you deliver this message to
France given your familiarity with
its recipient, but I believe in the
morning you be otherwise engaged.

Cambridge, nervous, waits for Hal to continue. Hal doesn't.

CAMBRIDGE

Pray how, my liege?

Hal looks him square in the eye. It's deep and personal.

HAL

Tomorrow you will have your heads
axed off. I have chosen to send you
as an advance party to Hell for the
considerable French number that
will soon be needing to find space
there.

Hal looks at Cambridge. The room is pin-drop still.

HAL (CONT'D)

You were once my friend.

Cambridge is stunned, bewildered.

CAMBRIDGE

I *am* your friend.

Hal moves away. Grey looks to William who watches him coldly.

55

EXT. EXECUTION YARD - DAY

55

Cambridge and Grey on a platform - before them a beheading block. Abject fear on their faces.

The full court gathered. Hal and William watch, steely.

A guard pushes Grey forward and onto his knees, his neck on the block. Grey breathes hard, hyperventilating.

CLERGYMAN

May God take pity on you.

A moment passes. Strange silence. The HEADSMAN swings his axe. Grey's head comes off. Blood gushes. Hal watches, and then meets Cambridge's terrified and confused eyes.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - NIGHT

The tavern is busy. Noise, loud voices in a confined space. The door opens. Six armed and masked guards enter and stand ominously at the entrance. The noise dies quickly.

GUARD

All leave. Now.

Scoundrels grab their cloaks and make their way hastily to the door. They file timidly out past the guards.

Falstaff sits at a far table, watching warily. He takes his scarf and goes to make a quiet exit.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You. Stay.

Falstaff sits again, weighing his options as the room empties. Hostess Hooper remains at a table. A guard points at her.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You. Leave.

HOOPER

This is my place.

A hooded figure walks in and stops at the top of the stairs.

HOODED MAN

The hostess can stay.

The man removes his hood. It's Hal. He steps in. He approaches Falstaff. Falstaff remains wary, watching Hal suspiciously.

HAL
That's my welcome?

FALSTAFF
You want me to curtsy? That could
take a while, with my funny knee
and all. First I'd have to stand.
Then I'd have to bend over. We
could be here all night. I think
I'll just stay sitting if it suits
Your Highness.

Hal places a purse of coins on the table for Hooper.

HAL
For the loss of patronage.
(to Falstaff)
I beg a moment of your time.

INT. TAVERN / EASTCHEAP - LATER

Hal and Falstaff sit at a corner table. Falstaff drinks ale.

HAL
I expect nothing of you. I am here
to ask. Simply.

FALSTAFF
And simply I refuse. I won't jump
to your attention, and surely not
to retread vile ground I vowed I
would never walk again. A man who
has found it so easy to shed his
skin should find wholly sensible
the sentiments of this here snake.

Hal can clearly sense Falstaff's underlying hurt feelings.

HAL
I acknowledge my neglect of you,
John. I regret it deeply. A new
chapter of my life was begun before
the last could be properly closed.

FALSTAFF
Why won't you drink with me?

Hal pauses, not sure if the question is a thaw in tension.

HAL
Drinking is what men do when they
wish to take temporary leave from
life. I no longer have this luxury.

Falstaff drinks and smiles to himself.

HAL (CONT'D)

Already I can feel the weight of this crown I wear. I know you remember, I once wished to eschew both its burden and its pretensions. But to do so now would be cowardice. It is incumbent upon me to steer a course for the defence and the betterment of England. This is that course.

(beat)

These concerns are mine and mine alone. But the fact that this here, now, be the first occasion I've had to sound them aloud to anyone other than myself speaks volumes. It speaks to the loneliness of the position in which I find myself. To steer our present course I've been forced to rely upon the counsel of men whose loyalty I question every waking moment. Every waking moment. I need around me men I trust beyond doubt - and of them there is only one on this earth I can identify with anything near certainty.

Hal looks to Falstaff with humility. Falstaff reads it.

HAL (CONT'D)

I expect nothing of you, John. Whatever decision you make I will respect without question. But I'm here because I love you and because at this point, in this chapter, I need that love like I need the air I breathe. I'm here because you are my friend.

FALSTAFF

A king has no friends. A king has only followers and foe.

The moment hangs heavy. Hal stands and dons his cloak.

HAL

I'm sorry that my occasion to visit carries with it this doleful weight.

Falstaff watches him, unmoved. Hal heads for the exit. Then -

FALSTAFF

Hal.

Hal stops and turns.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

I will come with you.

Beat. Hal watches him.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

I ask only one favour in return.

The moment is loaded. Falstaff points to Hooper.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Square my account with this
terrible hag, would you?

INT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal walks a line of assembled men. The full court plus the Duke of York and handful of others.

HAL

We welcome those newly arrived here.
Sir Daffydd from Wales.

He comes face to face with the noblemen one by one.

HAL (CONT'D)

Cousin Westmorland. Lords Warrick
and Dorset... Great men all. Turn
us now in common poise, with one
mind, sharpened. Let past
grievances be forgot. Our minds
make free to one end. Together we
will bring France down. Together we
will bring her to her knees.

(beat)

Captains all, to this end, I
introduce you to a new marshal of
our campaign.

Hal pauses. Anticipation.

HAL (CONT'D)

Sir John Falstaff.

Falstaff steps forward, strangely polite and nervous. He wears the best outfit he could muster at short notice. He looks out of place, but clean and combed and strong.

The other men in the room are confused. William is unsettled.

HAL (CONT'D)

Sir John's experience in battle should need no recitation. You know of him. Some of you have had the honour of fighting alongside him. Others have heard tale of his exploits and his bravery, of his redoubtable command of men. But I have tasked Sir John to join this campaign for one most vital reason alone: he respects war as only a man who has seen its most monstrous form can. He lusts after it not, but rather regards it with the grim sobriety that you and your men should hope he would. You will listen to him as you would to me. He is my eyes and my ears, my heart and my head.

Falstaff, on long-estranged ground, feels rusty. Hal looks to him to speak, which he does without fuss or flower.

FALSTAFF

Welcome and thank you, good sirs.
You are all well met.

INT. BEDCHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - NIGHT

Falstaff is in a bathtub. A pageboy sits on a stool beside the tub massaging Falstaff's foot which hangs over its edge. He looks uncomfortable. Falstaff scrubs his armpit. He squirms and laughs.

FALSTAFF

Hard. Not soft. Hard. Be forceful.

A knock at the door.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Enter!

The door opens. Hal enters. He takes in the scene. He closes the door behind him and takes a seat near the tub.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

I'm having to explain to this stripling that a soft scrub of the foot might be construed in some circles as a tickle.

Hal is unsettled by Falstaff's drunken jocularly.

HAL

Are you ready for what awaits us?

FALSTAFF

One is never ready for what awaits us.

HAL

Do you prepare yourself as best you might?

Falstaff knows Hal needs reassurance. He sobers a pinch.

FALSTAFF

You know me well. I see first to the fettle of my humours. My wits depend on it. As do yours. I counsel you follow my lead.

Hal smiles wearily. He's tired. He looks at the pageboy with his head bowed. He stands and heads for the door.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Rest well, my liege.

EXT. ARMOURY - DAY

Under a foreboding sky, a hundred men load supplies into crates on the backs of horse-drawn drays. Blacksmiths hammer and solder. Stockpiles of armour and weaponry are sorted. Macabre instruments of death and destruction. The dirty industrial end of the war machine. An imposing enterprise.

Around a corner, Falstaff is with two lowly conscripts.

FALSTAFF

I can't understand the garble coming out your mouth hole.

HAMMOND

We don't want to get on that ship for no war or such.

FALSTAFF

You don't want to get on that ship for no war or such.

HAMMOND

We know you got the position to get us off it now. We don't want to go to no war in France.

FALSTAFF

So while other men - few of whom I imagine *want* to go to war - do so anyway, for their good King has called to them, you imagine I should grant you some form of official exemption on account of your simply not wanting to 'go to no war in France or such'. Have I understood you? And what might be the benefit for me? In the gross violation of order such sympathetic dispensation would constitute?

HAMMOND

What?

FALSTAFF

Coin, brownface. What coin have you?

The conscript pulls a sack of coins from his filthy pocket.

HAMMOND

This.

Falstaff takes the sack and starts counting coins discreetly.

FALSTAFF

What are your names?

HAMMOND

Hammond and Horland. I'm Hammond and he's Horland.

FALSTAFF

I don't care which one of you is which.

Falstaff finishes his count and pockets the sack.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Right. Piss off now, Hammond and Horland.

Hammond and Horland scurry away. As Falstaff heads back round to the main yard, he looks up and waves to someone.

Looking on from across the yard, Hal stands watching the industry. He nods reply to Falstaff's wave. William is beside him. Hal looks concerned.

WILLIAM

My liege, I must ask. You believe
Sir John to be fit and suitable
enough to captain this effort?

Hal lets this sit. The ugly weapons being prepared and packed
portend only blood and death.

HAL

This is what we have set in motion.
I must know that it will be
captained by men of good intent -
above all else. There are few of
whom I know it clear and true.

(beat, looks at William)

You might be the only other,
William. You're a man of good
intent. But you're not a soldier.

Hal looks back down at the war preparations.

HAL (CONT'D)

John is a good man.

EXT. SHIP - DUSK

Above deck, Hal with William, Dorset and Falstaff, a map laid
out before them. Hal is deep in thought. The other men watch
him. Beyond, a huge flotilla of English ships on the channel.

HAL

We shall know soon enough. They
meet us at sea or upon our landing -
we shall know all in the morning.
You must rest.

Hal rubs his face deeply. The men rise to leave.

HAL (CONT'D)

John.

As the men file down a ladder to the lower deck, Falstaff
waits. Hal looks at him. Falstaff, about to break the silence -

HAL (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Hal clearly had something else to say, but couldn't find it.

FALSTAFF

For what?

HAL
For being here. With me.

FALSTAFF
Small price to pay to get that
detestable Hooper woman off my back.

Hal smiles sadly.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
You too should rest, my liege.

Falstaff smiles, nods and climbs the ladder.

INT. SHIP / BELOW DECK - NIGHT

Falstaff steps down below deck, dark and cramped with men. He roams among them - trepidation, outright fear on their faces, an eerie quiet under the ship's creak and groan.

Falstaff puts his hand on shoulders, makes much eye contact. These looks he has seen on many faces before - the looks of men who wonder if their remaining lives might now be counted in hours. He tries to reassure with his calm smile, but knows nothing can ever truly assuage their feelings.

He takes a seat on a sack of grain at the end of a row of hammocks. He folds his arms, watches the men a moment longer, then closes his eyes.

OMITTED

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Fog. A boat grinds its bow onto the sand. Hal and Falstaff, in light armour, jump into knee deep water and wade ashore.

EXT. HARFLEUR TOWN - DAY

Over the dunes, Hal, Falstaff, Dorset and a collection of twenty or so men-at-arms walk warily between seemingly abandoned farm buildings. They tread lightly, swords drawn.

Two soldiers act as point men ahead.

Terrifying stillness. No one speaks. The town feels freshly abandoned. The mist drifts like smoke through it.

A lone donkey wanders aimless. The men watch it warily.

On the rise beyond, a castle looms.

EXT. HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Light rain. The English have set up a makeshift camp on the outskirts of Harfleur. Thousands of men and horses. Giant trebuchets are being assembled.

EXT. TENT / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DUSK

Hal with Falstaff, William, Dorset, Scrope and Westmorland. They sit by a fire under a canopy slung from a tent.

DORSET

We must storm that castle. It will be bloody. We will most surely sacrifice souls. Thus is the nature of war. It is bloody and soulless.

Hal listens, thinking.

DORSET (CONT'D)

If circumstances were other, we might hold this place to siege, but I fear the march of time is our second enemy. We have no way of knowing how well supplied they are behind those walls. A siege may take months, and months, I fear, we have not at our disposal. Our force is too large to sustain a lengthy siege. We must move. Men in these numbers fixed here will fall to hunger and disease.

Hal takes this in, then looks to Falstaff. Falstaff spits.

FALSTAFF

War is bloody and soulless.

Hal looks to the dirt at his feet.

EXT. HARFLEUR CASTLE - NIGHT

The now assembled trebuchets - huge wooden machines of medieval warfare - are being armed by English soldiers, working by the light of giant bonfires. Once loaded, each trebuchet hurls a terrifying fireball through the dark across the field, to crash into the castle's walls.

Hal stands and watches while fires burn all around him.

EXT. HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The rain has eased, but the sky is grey and the ground muddy. Men are already looking cold, wasted, forlorn. Some eat soup.

Hal, William and Falstaff stand watching the trebuchets continue their horrible bombardment on the castle on the hill. Smoke billows from within the walls.

WILLIAM

The Archbishop has arrived.

From the beach below, a small retinue of soldiers approaches. Leading them is the Archbishop. Attendants accompany him, holding a canopy over his head. Hal watches them waddle through the mud in full silly clerical regalia.

ARCHBISHOP

Your Majesty, tis good to see you well!

INT. TENT / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Hal, Falstaff, William and Dorset sit with the Archbishop.

ARCHBISHOP

Surely you can not simply idle here until they decide to come out?

FALSTAFF

That's precisely the definition of a siege.

ARCHBISHOP

How long might that take? Surely there is no way of knowing.

FALSTAFF

That too is a common characteristic of a siege.

HAL

I will not send my men up that hill.

ARCHBISHOP

But why in heavens not?

HAL

I will not sacrifice my men so flagrantly, nor so speculatively.

ARCHBISHOP

This is war. Men die in war.

Hal lets this sit. He watches the Archbishop coldly.

HAL

How fortunate you are to find its horrors so unexceptional.

ARCHBISHOP

Well then why do you not simply go around? If they insist on hiding in their castle, why do you not simply go around it? Let them hide. Hiding is an admission of defeat. Take it as such and we can press on.

Hal looks to Falstaff and William to share his bewildered disdain. He turns back to the Archbishop.

HAL

And so well versed in the art of warfare.

Hal stands and exits the tent.

WILLIAM

(to Archbishop)

We must take this town. We must establish a garrison foothold here for our lines of supply from England. Simply ignoring the force behind those walls is entirely untenable.

The Archbishop is uncomfortable speaking candidly in Falstaff's presence.

ARCHBISHOP

We must expedite these concerns, my lords. You understand this. Do not forget that I have underwritten this campaign. I have interest here. And I will be heard.

Beat. William stands and exits. The Archbishop is left to squirm under Falstaff's stare.

EXT. HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Hal walks between tents. He is startled by the sound of a distant horn. Westmorland approaches out of breath.

WESTMORLAND

My liege... They have surrendered.

William walks to them. Hal turns to him.

HAL

Our debate now it seems is
irrelevant.

The distant horn blows again. Hal smiles.

HAL (CONT'D)

As are the Archbishop's bleatings.

EXT. HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Dorset, Scrope, Westmorland, the Archbishop and William stand beside Hal who sits on his throne under a canopy.

The CAPTAIN OF HARFLEUR, JEAN D'ESTOUTEVILLE, genuflects before him.

D'ESTOUTEVILLE

(in French, subtitled)

The day is yours. We ask only that
our women and children be freed.
There are already many hungry and
wounded and becoming sick.

HAL

(in French, subtitled)

Upon full account of the castle, I
see no reason to deny your request.
You will have tonight to oversee
this evacuation and to corral your
men prisoners. Lord Scrope will
oversee this night and take full
possession of the castle in the
morning.

D'Estouteville stands and nods. Scrope escorts him away.

EXT. CAMP / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Falstaff moves through the filthy camp.

INT. TENT / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Falstaff enters. Hal is with William, Westmorland and Dorset.
Hal is on his throne.

WILLIAM

I am told it would be but a day
before his arrival. Perchance two.

DORSET

He wishes to slow us.

FALSTAFF

Who wishes to slow us?

WESTMORLAND

We have received word that the
Dauphin is en route. He wishes
conference with His Highness.

HAL

We know nothing of his purpose?

WILLIAM

We know only that he desires
conference. I would hope his
purpose be to deliver his father's
early surrender.

DORSET

I strongly advise we disregard this
word of his approach and ready our
movement. The Dauphin will be in
haste cobbling a bickering army
from all corners. We mustn't let
him dally us. We must make
advantage of their disarray.

All wait for Hal to speak. Hal turns to Falstaff.

HAL

Sir John, please, your counsel.

The men look to Falstaff. He shrugs.

FALSTAFF

I've never met the man, this French
Prince. I can't speak to his
motivation.

The men wait for more from Falstaff. None is coming.

HAL

We wait one day more. After this,
the Prince can deliver his message
to us on the move.

INT. HAL'S TENT / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Hal is asleep in his bed. The Lord Chamberlain is asleep on the floor. William enters.

WILLIAM
My liege. Forgive me.

Hal stirs awake.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
He's here. Can you smell him? He has doused himself in perfume.

OMITTED

INT. TENT / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

The French Prince, THE DAUPHIN, LOUIS, DUKE OF GUYENNE, sits on Hal's throne, laughing with his men. Hal and William enter. Falstaff, Westmorland and Dorset are already there. The Dauphin is dressed ostentatiously, flamboyant, vain.

DAUPHIN
Your Majesty! Excuse the hour. I have never visited here before. I find we have lost our way.

Hal assays the Dauphin and his men.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
Please, sit. Or I beg your pardon.

He stands.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
You must invite *me*, of course. This is your domain.

Hal doesn't move. The Dauphin sits again, raises his cup.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
To your little victory.

Hal stares.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
Do you wonder why I have come?

The Dauphin looks to Hal, then to William and Falstaff, then back to Hal. He raises his eyebrows.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
Do you wonder this?

Hal stares impassively at the Dauphin.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
I have *not* come to offer you
surrender if that is what you were
hoping. I have come instead to
describe for you your end days, the
screams of your men as they die
slow.

The Dauphin stares at Hal, trying to be intimidating.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
And so, King of England, you seem
so intent on making France your new
home, I will help you. I will drain
your body of its blood and I will
bury it under a tree. A little
French tree. Very young and small.
Since perchance that is fitting of
your mind to come here. Small. And
maybe your -

He gestures to his cock.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
But no, your balls must be big.

His humour is forced. He smiles a gloating smile to his men.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
A tiny little cock. And giant
balls!

The Dauphin laughs falsely and loudly, then sobers.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
And the sound of your wives and
children weeping I will use to lull
me to sleep at night. Oh, but of
course there is no one for you? To
weep for you? No wife or children?
No? I might just use *that* thought
to lull me to sleep at night.

Falstaff yawns wide and loud. The Dauphin is taken aback.

FALSTAFF
Pardon me.

Hal stares dully at the Dauphin.

DAUPHIN
Have you heard what I have said?

HAL
I have. It was stirring.
(to Falstaff)
Sir John, walk with me.

Falstaff nods and stands. Hal puts his hand on William's shoulder and smiles to the room.

HAL (CONT'D)
Good night, all.

WILLIAM
Good night, Your Majesty.

Hal exits.

EXT. CAMP / HARFLEUR TOWN OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Hal and Falstaff walk between tents. Hal is dark and focussed.

HAL
Ready the men to move. Waste no
time.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Hal rides the length of his massive army train. Weary men. Many are sick with dysentery - archers, food carriages, masons, livestock. And shackled French prisoners on foot.

A carriage carries the Archbishop. He smiles as Hal passes. Hal ignores him.

EXT. RIVER SOMMES - DAY

Hal, Falstaff and Dorset at a forest's edge. They are joined by William, and attendants.

DORSET
We must cross these woodlands. We
drift still further north if we
stay along that road.

Hal turns to Falstaff who shakes his head.

FALSTAFF

I don't like the smell of these woods. They smell of French prince.

Hal looks into the dense thicket. Falstaff smells the air.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Peculiar smell it is.

Falstaff ambles off. Hal watches him. Dorset boils.

EXT. HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Sure enough, the Dauphin and a handful of his soldiers hide on the forested rise of the hill flanking the crossing. He watches the English move on. He spits and walks away.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMPSITE / FOREST - DAY

The English in full swing making camp. Tents are raised. Hammers post pegs. Horses are freed of their saddles.

Hal sits on a crate and pulls his boots off. He looks around. Men cough and collapse exhausted.

Three BOY ATTENDANTS leave the camp to gather wood and water. Two carry axes, one a pail.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The boys wander through the forest. Shafts of light through the trees. The sound of the bubbling river.

Moments later - two of the boys gather kindling.

Meanwhile, the third boy gets to the river's edge. He scoops water into his pail. When he stands, a figure holding a dagger appears behind him. A hand reaches around and grabs his mouth. He is stabbed through the spine. The noise -

Alerts the other boys 30 yards away. They drop their kindling and run. Two more French soldiers give chase, one with a crossbow.

One of the boys is dropped by a crossbow bolt.

The other runs straight into The Dauphin, standing in wait with another soldier.

The Dauphin's face is camouflaged with charcoal.

He crouches before the frightened boy.

DAUPHIN
(in English)
Hello, little boy.

The boy is practically paralysed with fear.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid.

Strange beat. The Dauphin looks the boy over, studies his face. The boy's fear is mounting, tearful, sickening.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
Hush now, small one. Don't be afraid. You will live. I shall have you deliver a gift to your king.

He strokes the kid's hair.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
Will you do that for me?

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMPSITE - LATER

Tight on the blonde boy's traumatised face as he walks slowly out of the forest and back into camp. At the edge of camp, men notice him and stand back in horror.

The boy carries the severed head of the pail boy.

INT. HAL'S TENT / RIVERSIDE CAMPSITE - MOMENTS LATER

Hal sits boiling. Falstaff watches him.

HAL
Double the guards to twenty yards through the night. Three hours at a watch. I want these men fresh and alert. Any man caught sleeping will have his eyes gouged. Any caught speaking will lose his tongue.

He looks at Falstaff. Falstaff stands.

HAL (CONT'D)
And I want all French prisoners in our train put to death. Leave their corpses speared on pikes by the river's edge.

FALSTAFF

I will heed the first command. The second - you'll need to carry out that mass execution yourself.

HAL

What did you say to me?

FALSTAFF

You are not that man.

HAL

How dare you?

FALSTAFF

Show your feeling in here, with me. But do not let it leave this tent.

HAL

How dare you defy me? I am your king. I should have you killed alongside those shackled French pigs.

Hal breaths hard, looking at Falstaff with venom.

HAL (CONT'D)

And where is the fearsome old warrior about whom I've heard so much, that trumpeted his battle-smarts to me so loudly? You've been mute since we crossed the sea. I seem to be serving as my own chief tactician, my own commander, my own counsel. Where is the great warrior Falstaff?

Beat. Falstaff is calm. He watches Hal fume.

FALSTAFF

I speak only when there is something to be said. Too often have I seen men of war invent work for themselves, work that leads to nought but vainglory and slaughtered men. I am not *that* man. And this here is the war you have chosen to wage.

Hal charges Falstaff, collars him, a knife to his throat.

HAL

I will disembowel you right here with mine own hand.

Falstaff stares coolly into Hal's eyes.

FALSTAFF
You're not *that* man either.

They hold a look. Hal fumes, then backs down. Falstaff exits.

EXT. RIVERSIDE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The air is muted. Men are in shock. Some stare into fires. Others lie still. Somewhere in the shadows, a man sobs.

Falstaff roams among them. He lugs a bottle. He's drunk. He has a wild look in his eye.

He stumbles upon three men kneeling in prayer, eyes closed. He sits and watches them quietly. They finish. Amen. They open their eyes. They notice Falstaff. They bow their heads.

FALSTAFF
Have you ever had cause to hear the
Archbishop of Canterbury speak?

None answer.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
It's quite a show. You're
prostrated there already. I shall
sermonise. I'll render it for you.

Falstaff looks around. He finds a bucket. He puts it on his head upended like the Archbishop's mitre. He exaggerates the Archbishop's lisp, tongue hanging from his mouth.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
And the Lord saideth, I knoweth
thou hath savour for spelt and
sorrel and steer steaks with juices
and sauces. But I give you this, my
sacred promise: I will summons a
great pestilence, carried by
serpents on floodwaters - such
unspeakable suffering, unspeakable
suffering, from which there shall
be no succour - should you forsake
the simple sausage.

The men smile wide, try to contain their laughter.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)
And know that when this pestilence
comes, it comes not to smite thee
for thine past sins committed.
(MORE)

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

It comes because thou'st forsook my
unassailable love for sausages.

Men laugh. More gather. Falstaff hands off his bottle.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

And when thou'st can find no
sausages, thou'st must take to the
seas in ships - sailing ships,
splendid sailing vessels! - so as
to search for delicious fishes of
all descriptions. Salty sea
creatures and shellfish to be
savoured with sesame and, ah, ah -

SOMEONE

Spinach.

FALSTAFF

Spinach! Yes, indeed! Spinaci! -

Falstaff chokes and laughs and chokes.

OMITTED

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE - DAY

Falstaff rides in his forward position. He hones his eyes
through the trees around them. He knows the French are close.

Hal rides up to take his position. The look they exchange is
cold. The air is tense. The men are eerily silent.

EXT. RIVER - LATER

The English train crosses a swamp. Horses wade. Men struggle
to keep their supplies from tumbling into the water.

EXT. AGINCOURT - LATER

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The train has halted. Hal, William, Dorset and Falstaff
survey the field before them. Pristine countryside. A gentle
slope to a small hill on its far side. Dense forest to the
right and left, but in between - a huge empty tranquil field.

HAL

Dorset, summon your fastest rider.

DORSET

Yes, my liege.

Dorset turns to his ATTENDANTS nearby.

DORSET (CONT'D)
Dartmouth.

DARTMOUTH (20), skinny like a jockey, trots to the group.

DARTMOUTH
Sires. What can I do for ye?

Hal points to the crest of the far hill.

HAL
Tell me what lies over that hill. Ride
fast and return directly.

Dartmouth spurs his horse. The men watch him cross the field.

EXT. FIELD / AGINCOURT - CONTINUOUS

Dartmouth rides hard into the wind as he crests the hill.

At the top, over the other side, he can see thousands of
Frenchmen - an army lying in wait. An intimidating sight.

OMITTED

INT. TENT / AGINCOURT - EVENING

Passions high. William sits quiet. Falstaff eats an apple.

DORSET
We are both outnumbered and out-
positioned. They have the down-
slope in their favour. Our need to
advance puts us already at
disadvantage.

HAL
The longer we wait, the larger
their force will grow. And with it
our disadvantage. Your archers, my
lord, are of superior faculty.
French crossbows are no match for
an English longbow. We should
hobble their number on first
assault by these means alone.

DORSET
York's charge in centre faces four
lines of mounted knights.

(MORE)

DORSET (CONT'D)

Three of men-at-arms. Our archers here might weaken those by half. But not eight lines. Nine. Ten. More.

Hal can't argue with this.

DORSET (CONT'D)

You speak true, my liege. The longer we wait, the greater our disadvantage. But it is possible our disadvantage has already grown insurmountable. A great many men are already desperately ill and weak from hunger.

HAL

(challenging)

What then, my Lord, do you propose we do?

DORSET

(beat)

I propose we consider turning back, my liege. To return again at a later date, stronger, better prepared.

Hal stares defiantly, but knows opinion runs against him.

DORSET (CONT'D)

I know it will not bring the outcome we desire, but nor will the evisceration of our army. I'm reticent to speak for others here now, but I'm certain my fears are shared.

Hal looks at Dorset a moment longer, then -

HAL

Who here agrees with Lord Dorset?

Silence. No one will admit to it. Hal looks around the circle. Men avoid his eyes. The silence lingers. Until -

FALSTAFF

We can win this battle.

All turn to Falstaff. He lets the attention soak in. He chews his mouthful of apple.

DORSET

Is that so, Sir John?

FALSTAFF

Yes.

Dorset's patience with Falstaff has worn thin.

DORSET

And precisely *how* is it so, Sir John?

FALSTAFF

We fight without horses and without armour.

Dorset throws his arms in the air and looks to the sky.

DORSET

Heavens above! Please spare us from this man.

FALSTAFF

Their forward defence is a frontline of mounted men, many deep. Knights all. All on horseback, all in heavy armour. The ground down there is a floodplain, already half-sodden. And when the rain falls again tonight, as I know it will, that ground will turn to a muddy bog. With their horses and their armour, they will get stuck, they will fall and they will flounder like upturned beetles.

WESTMORLAND

As shall we.

FALSTAFF

Not if we travel light, without horses and without armour. Speed and mobility will be our advantage. We will pick them off like lame cattle and that great mound of fallen French knights will serve as our battlement.

WESTMORLAND

And how on earth can you be sure of rainfall tonight?

FALSTAFF

My left knee is aching - it only does that when rain is near.

DORSET

Oh, save us! My liege, please, put
a stop to this drivel.

HAL

(ignoring Dorset)

This would require their armoured
frontline come meet us in the mud.
How do you propose we invite that?

FALSTAFF

A small forward armoured attack of
our own. A false advance. They will
counter. We save our weight and
muscle for a nimble assault from
the flanks.

DORSET

They shan't be so easily deceived.
They will not respond to false
attack.

Dorset shakes his head, incredulous. Falstaff smiles and
then, suddenly, tosses his apple to Dorset. Dorset reacts,
startled, catches the apple.

FALSTAFF

They will respond.

He has their full attention. Dorset fumes, drops the apple.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

We move, they will meet us in the
mud. Our men-at-arms are
outnumbered. This they know. They
will hope to overwhelm us and so
will meet us with full force, no
matter how small our first advance.
Our great longbows will rain chaos
upon them from above. That chaos
will be our favour.

Hal ponders this, searching Falstaff's eyes for motivation.

DORSET

My liege. I implore you. We mustn't
listen to this madness. What is the
true experience of this man? He
once fought for Richard. Many years
ago. Since then he has done nothing
other than ride with the companies,
robbing and tormenting.

FALSTAFF

I never robbed anyone who didn't
deserve to be robbed.

Beat. Hal looks only at Falstaff.

HAL

If it rains tonight, we fight
tomorrow.

EXT. FALSTAFF'S TENT / AGINCOURT - NIGHT

Falstaff sits alone by a fire outside his tent, short of
friends. Hal sits beside him and stares into the flame.

HAL

If you have concocted this plan,
half-baked and speculative, merely
to prove to me your worth, please
say so now.

FALSTAFF

All plans are speculative, my
liege.

HAL

Please, John, do not call me that
when we're alone. It makes me feel
as though we are living a fiction.

FALSTAFF

Are we not?

A loaded moment. Hal drops his eyes, penitent.

HAL

Though you might not think it
possible, you are my friend.

Falstaff stokes the fire. For Hal, a disconsolate moment.
Falstaff eases it.

FALSTAFF

All plans are speculative. And as I
say, I only speak them when I can
feel them true. This one I feel in
my bones. This one I can feel in my
kneebone.

He smiles. Hal shares it. Silence. Hal stares into the fire.

HAL

Here we are on the eve of this fight, and I'm scared to wonder, to tell it true, why we are even here.

FALSTAFF

You best discover the answer to that for yourself. The men out there deserve it. These are the men who are still here. These are the men that tried not to bribe their way home, that chose not to run to their villages to hide. These men are your willing shadows. They've given their lives over to you.

(beat)

I can't say I know what forces have conspired to bring you here, but these men need *you*, just as you need them. These men deserve your confidence. If you can not give them that, at least then tell them a magnificent lie.

HAL

Why are *you* here?

FALSTAFF

I'm here because you asked me to come.

Falstaff looks at Hal warmly, then pats Hal's leg and stands.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Good night, Hal. Sleep well.

Falstaff steps inside his tent, leaving Hal alone.

Hal looks out over the sprawling camp - small fires dotted among clumps of cold and tired men, shadows in the dark.

INT/EXT. FALSTAFF'S TENT / AGINCOURT - DAWN

Falstaff wakes. The sound of light rain on the tent.

He steps outside, looks to the sky, feels the drops on his face.

He crouches before an old chest. He unlatches and opens it. Inside is a suit of heavy armour. He lifts out a helmet. He brushes dust off it and regards it wistfully.

INT/EXT. HAL'S TENT / AGINCOURT - MORNING

Hal, kneeling in prayer. The Lord Chamberlain stands quietly by. Hal stands and exits his tent.

William is waiting outside. They survey the camp, beginning its preparations.

HAL

Is this folly?

WILLIAM

As you say, my liege, I am not a soldier. Tis not for me to question your instinct. I can advise on strategy, not tactic. I would say I fear the pall it should cast on the vigour of your fresh crown were we to return home today. To be sure, defeat here might cast that same pall. Retreat would guarantee it.

EXT. ENGLISH CAMP / AGINCOURT - MORNING

In amongst the wider battle preparations around the camp, Westmorland briefs a contingent of twenty knights, seated and standing and rumbling with disquiet.

WESTMORLAND

These are the King's orders. We are to fight unarmoured, and without chargers.

KNIGHT

We are to be sacrificed. Is that what he asks of us?

WESTMORLAND

His belief is that fighting unarmoured and unmounted will not only secure us victory, it is the surest way to keep you alive.

KNIGHT

Rot.

WESTMORLAND

And I will say this: if our King were to ask you to sacrifice yourself, for the greater good of the realm, I'd expect you honour that request as any loyal and stouthearted subject should.

OMITTED

EXT. ARMOURY TENT / AGINCOURT - MOMENTS LATER

Hal walks the camp in only the lightest of armour. Archers string bows, arrows are bundled. Horses sense looming danger and scuff hoofs in the dirt.

Hal rounds a corner to find Falstaff outside the armoury tent, being dressed in his heavy armour. Metal all over. He sees Hal.

FALSTAFF

This wind whips from the north.
(smiles)
These are clouds sent from England.

HAL

Why are you being fitted? We were to fight without plate.

FALSTAFF

We need a front line to draw them in.

HAL

It can't be you.

FALSTAFF

The idea was mine. Some man must lead that first push to sell it well.

Falstaff fastens his armour.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

My men have been assembled. Most would *rather* wear the full suit. It gives comfort. And I can't in all good conscience send them down there to realise my speculative drivel without getting muddy alongside them.

HAL

I will fight with you.

FALSTAFF

(smiles)
Noble. You know it can't be.

The armourer lifts Falstaff's shoulder plate over his head.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

Hal.

(corrects himself, smiles)

My liege. This is what I was built for. I die here or I die over a bottle in Eastcheap. I think this makes for a better story. And you have things still to do.

(beat)

You will join the fight. Be sure not to join it early. Promise that. No matter what you see down there. We must first draw them all in. All of them.

Falstaff rests his palm on Hal's cheek.

FALSTAFF (CONT'D)

We win. It will be an honour. So win, my friend. And maybe then you'll lighten enough to have a drink with me.

He grabs his helmet and waddles away. Hal watches him, lost.

EXT. ENGLISH CAMP / AGINCOURT - MORNING

Light rain continues to fall. Hal strides between tents, distressed. His horse is tethered, attendants in wait. He checks and tightens its saddle. The Archbishop appears beside him. An attendant holds an umbrella over the Archbishop.

ARCHBISHOP

Your Majesty, I have come to wish you well. I hope to offer a prayer for the men before you set off.

Hal ignores him, mounts his horse and rides into the camp. Men watch him pass, William among them, as he makes for the empty battlefield and then rides at speed, alone, across it towards the French camp. All are dumbfounded.

EXT. FRENCH CAMP / AGINCOURT - MORNING

Commotion at the French camp at sight of Hal's lone approach.

Hal arrives and dismounts. Frenchmen are armed and wary.

HAL

(in French, subtitled)

Where is the Dauphin?

EXT. DAUPHIN'S TENT / AGINCOURT - MORNING

Hal on bended knee.

HAL
 (in French, subtitled)
 I humbly thank you for receiving
 me, noble lord.

The Dauphin, smug on his throne, surrounded by his entourage.

DAUPHIN
 Speak English. Please. I enjoy to
 speak English. It is simple and
 ugly.

Hal stands, trying to hide his contempt.

DAUPHIN (CONT'D)
 I have been awaiting your surrender
 all the morning. All the night. It
 might have saved us all a great
 unease had you offered it sooner.

HAL
 I know you speak not for your
 father -

DAUPHIN
 (haughtily)
 I do speak for him.

HAL
 I know you do not speak for your
 father and so I come now to you
 directly. I have not come to
 surrender. But too much Christian
 blood will be spilled on this field
 today, and so I propose that you
 and I fight one man on one man, we
 fight in our armies' stead. If I
 lose, my men will leave this place
 forthwith and forever. If I win, I
 will assume this kingdom's crown
 upon your father's death. I know he
 is not long for this earth and so I
 will let him see done his days in
 peace. But once he is gone, France
 will be mine.

The Dauphin doesn't respond, then squirms and scoffs.

HAL (CONT'D)
 What say you?

DAUPHIN

Are you afraid, young Henry?

HAL

What say you?

DAUPHIN

Are you afraid of this battle?
There is no shame of it.

The Dauphin's posturing is hollow. Clearly, he doesn't want to fight Hal. Clearly, his men would rather he did.

HAL

Save your men.

DAUPHIN

(anger rising)

Save your own men. Surrender to me.
You have come *here*. To me.

HAL

I can not do that.

DAUPHIN

Well, then, boy, let us make famous
that field out there. Let us make
famous this little village of
Agincourt that will forever mark
the site of your callow disgrace.

Hal stares him down. He knows there is no deal to be done.

EXT. FRONT LINE / ENGLISH CAMP / AGINCOURT - MORNING

The rain has intensified. Hal rides slowly back from the field and between rows of his ready men. Falstaff's smaller, armoured vanguard. Archers. Infantry. All wait. Thousands of hardened, nervous men. All eerily silent.

Hal surveys them. He searches their eyes, his distress visible. All is strangely quiet. Then -

HAL

You expect of me a speech? I have
only one to give - and it is the
same one I would were we not
standing here on the brim of a
battlefield. It's the same one I'd
give were we to meet by chance in
the street. It is this: I have only
ever hoped, I have only ever *longed*
for one thing.

(MORE)

HAL (CONT'D)

To live to see our kingdom united.
To see our kingdom united under
this English crown.

He dismounts and walks among the men, searching their faces.
He is on the verge of tears. The men watch him, uncertain.

HAL (CONT'D)

All men are born to die. We know
it. We carry it with us always. If
your day is today, then so be it.
Mine will be tomorrow. Or mine
today and yours tomorrow. It
matters not. What matters is that
you know, in your hearts, that
today you are that kingdom united.
You are England. All of it. Each
and every one of you. England is
you. And it is the space between
you. Fight not for yourselves, but
for that space.

Hal takes an arm each of the two men nearest him and places
it on the other's shoulder.

HAL (CONT'D)

Fight for that space. Fill it. Make
it tissue. Make it mass.

He urges others to place their arms on others' shoulders. The
gesture quickly spreads across the entire army.

HAL (CONT'D)

Make it impenetrable. Make it
unassailable. Make it yours.

Hal's emotions have spilled over. He lets the men see his
vulnerability, his raw wound. They look back at him. They
soak him in.

HAL (CONT'D)

Make it England!

Beat. And then, loud -

HAL (CONT'D)

Captains to it. Lords and great men
all. Each man to it.

Falstaff smiles and puts on his helmet. His men follow suit -
a formidable battalion of knights.

EXT. FRONT LINE / FRENCH CAMP / AGINCOURT - SAME

The Dauphin, decked in clean, flouncy armour, watches the English force cross the field. A COMMANDER is next to him.

COMMANDER
Les imbéciles.

The commander strides away.

COMMANDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Attention!

The Dauphin watches, almost smiling.

EXT. FRONT LINE / ENGLISH CAMP / AGINCOURT - SAME

Falstaff crosses the line of his men. He drags his sword over their armour chest plates, a version of his own speech.

He lowers his face guard, breathes, and then - his band of men begin their slow foot-march across the field.

Hal stands with Westmorland. They watch, tense. He moves away towards the flanking forest.

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

Falstaff and his men march across the field. Their line is tight. They move slow.

EXT. FOREST / BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

Hal strides through the forest flank, all the while watching Falstaff's advance. He meets Dorset, who waits with hundreds of other men - a team of guerilla fighters on the edge of the forest. Maces and daggers and leather tunics at most. Everyone stripped down to bare minimum garb.

The French still haven't moved. Tension rises.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

Falstaff's retinue continues its march. The French mounted line on the hill before them still hasn't moved.

EXT. FOREST / BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

Hal watches the field. And then a horn blows, and the first French cavalry line begins its descent down the hill - but it's only one line, moving slow.

HAL

Archers.

VOICE (O.S.)

Archers!

The archers call is relayed through the forest to -

EXT. FRONT LINE / ENGLISH CAMP / AGINCOURT - SAME

- Westmorland who raises his hand.

WESTMORLAND

Archers!

Thousands of English archers step forward and load their bows. They raise them to sky - and then release in unison.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

A swarm of arrows rain down on the advancing French force, already slipping on the wet ground. As the arrows hit with deadly force, chaos erupts - horses bash into each other, the French line splinters, knights fall from their mounts and are trampled.

Those horses still advancing break into a gallop towards the marching line of Falstaff's men.

Falstaff's men hold tight and then, as the mounted French disarray is almost upon them, they take to a knee, pole-axes and swords braced into the ground. When the French line hits these weapons are speared into the breasts and legs of horses that fall and thrash. French knights are thrown into the mud and all hell breaks loose.

The battlefield quickly turns into a seething mess of mud and flailing knights and confused thrashing horses. Men are trampled and bashed.

A knight, fallen in the mud, gets stuck face down and crawls around helplessly. He tries to lift himself. A horse falls on top of him, pinning him to drown in the sodden earth.

Falstaff is himself crawling on the ground, wrestling with a French knight. He holds the knight's helmet in the mud, suffocating him, while himself being pummeled by men and horses. When the knight stops moving he tries desperately to get back to his feet - near impossible with men and horses right on top of him.

He manages to grab onto a horse's stirrup and lift himself up, only to find himself jammed between the rumps of two terrified horses. Desperate for breath, Falstaff manages to get his helmet off. He lifts his face to the sky and sucks in the air.

EXT. FOREST / BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

Hal watches the carnage from the forest flank. He wants to fight, but knows he can't until the rest of the French force is drawn in. That force sits on top of the hill, unmoving.

EXT. FRENCH CAMP / AGINCOURT - SAME

The Dauphin watches from his position as the fight unfolds below. He signals to his commander.

COMMANDER

Avance!

The Dauphin dons his menacing, elaborately decorated helmet.

EXT. FOREST / BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - SAME

Hal watches as a horn blows and the rest of the French force - hundreds of armoured knights on foot - march down the hill. Hal turns to Dorset.

HAL

They come.

EXT. ENGLISH CAMP / AGINCOURT - SAME

Westmorland signals again.

WESTMORLAND

Archers!

OMITTED

EXT. BATTLEFIELD / AGINCOURT - LATER

As we return to real time again, the rain is falling. Hal is somehow lying on the flank of a dying horse.

He is dragged off and thrown into the mud. While the ground is carpeted with dead and dying, the fighting is already beginning to thin. From the ground, Hal can see Westmorland being attacked by two French knights.

As he's about to be overcome, Hal steps in and hacks one of them down, giving Westmorland the time and space to finish the other.

Hal is sucked back into the morass - until eerily it clears. Hal turns to see the Dauphin before him, high on his horse, flanked by two equally menacingly armoured mounted guards.

A space clears on the thinning field, as the Dauphin dismounts and approaches Hal.

Hal picks up a discarded sword and readies himself.

DAUPHIN

Come then, King of England.

Hal approaches him slowly and venomously.

The Dauphin charges - and then immediately slips over in the mud. He flounders. Tries to stand, slips again.

Hal watches him - as do all the other men on the field - exhausted, sucking in air, battle-scarred.

Hal looks to the Dauphin's guards atop their horses.

They offer no assistance. They sit motionless atop their horses looking down on their squirming leader.

Hal steps back and nods to a group of his own men - who charge at the Dauphin, tackling him to the ground and tearing into him with their daggers.

Hal walks away as the sound of HORNS echoes across the field and his tired army breaks into a victory roar.

Hal forges a path through the mud and gore, scouring the ground, searching faces of the dead and dying while riderless horses roam the field too - as if on their own search.

He searches more urgently until he stops over another corpse. He drops to his knees, then sits in the mud beside the body.

Falstaff - lifeless and serene.

Hal sits with him and cries. He looks out at the battlefield, watching the celebration of his men. He then rests his head on Falstaff's back. He sits this way a long moment.

Finally, Hal looks up. He sees a mass of his fellow soldiers spread across the field, watching him. Some two hundred men.

Then - the closest soldier kneels. Followed by a second.

Hal is soon faced with an entire army kneeling before him.

He stands and walks slowly across the field as more take up the position.

Westmorland approaches, filthy, exhausted. He bows.

WESTMORLAND

My liege.

He stands and smiles. They hug, but Hal's is without joy.

WESTMORLAND (CONT'D)

The prisoners we have took are a rabble. I fear we will not secure them should their army regroup.

Hal looks at him, strangely distant.

HAL

Kill them all.

Hal walks away.

EXT. NANCY OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The English army marches in slow silent procession along a trail towards the town of Nancy.

Hal, on horseback, leads the procession. William and Dorset beside him. The Archbishop is there too, smugly proud.

A thin crowd of peasant villagers lines the trail. The atmosphere is strange, cold and muted. The people have come out to see the invaders, their conquerors.

EXT. MAYORAL BUILDINGS / NANCY - DAY

In the courtyard of impressive civic buildings, Hal dismounts. French officials are there to greet him.

The FRENCH LORD STEWARD genuflects. The air is tense.

FRENCH LORD STEWARD
 (in French, subtitled)
 Your Highness. His Majesty King
 Charles is here to meet you.
 (beat)
 He is sunning himself.

EXT. PORCH / MAYORAL BUILDINGS / NANCY - DAY

Hal is lead onto a colonnaded stone porch.

FRENCH LORD STEWARD
 (in French, subtitled)
 Your Majesty, King Henry the Fifth
 of England.

Across the porch, an old man in regal attire sits in a reclined chair. He is barefoot. He speaks English.

KING CHARLES VI
 Your Highness. Welcome. Please,
 come sit here with me.

Hal crosses the porch. Charles gestures for him to sit.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 Please.

Hal sits. William, the Archbishop and others remain standing.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 I like to have the sun on my skin.
 But not too much. Too much is very
 dangerous. So I take only a small
 amount.

Among Charles's entourage, seated discreetly in the setting, is a young woman, 20 - the only woman in the room.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 And here I meet the man about whom
 I have heard such a great deal.
 Much of it apocryphal, no doubt.
 Rumour and gossip.
 (MORE)

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 And yet when finally you are here
 before me, this apocrypha becomes
 air. Or memory. Nothing.

He searches Hal's eyes. Hal seems calm and quietly contained.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 I can only imagine the stories that
 have been told about me. And about
 my own son. No doubt you have heard
 many. I suspect they may be the
 reason we are here today. My son
 was impetuous. And what he felt, he
 felt keenly - for better or for
 worse. Very often for worse. And
 the best defence I can summon now
 is that he was young. Maybe it is a
 poor defence. But I hope it is one
 with which you might feel some
 affinity. I hope also that you
 might understand my need to grieve
 his death as all fathers must
 grieve their lost sons - whatever
 their failings.

HAL
 I do understand.

KING CHARLES VI
 Thank you.

Charles pauses, thinking.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 This conversation we have - or are
 about to have - has been had many
 times before and will be had many
 times again for centuries to come,
 between men from all corners,
 between men of vanity and men of
 good reason, in whatever
 combination. I would like to
 believe that you and I are men of
 good reason. Men of vanity would
 have this trouble continue until
 the brink of our mutual
 devastation. Maybe beyond.

Charles looks around at Hal's entourage, gently assaying these
 men for the first time.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
 I have, of course, travelled here
 to offer you my surrender.

The Archbishop smiles proudly.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
Maybe it is our shared destiny that
our lands be ruled as one. We have
shared histories - shared
apocrypha. Might it be that this is
the path we have travelled to make
our unity so.

Hal looks at the old man. His equanimity is humbling.

HAL
Do you ask anything of me in
return?

KING CHARLES VI
No.

Charles searches Hal's eyes, then shifts his gaze to the
woman sitting nearby. She lowers her eyes.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
I do, however, have for you a
proposition - that as a gesture of
harmony and goodwill you take the
hand of my daughter, Catherine, in
marriage.

Hal looks to PRINCESS CATHERINE, who looks back at him,
defiant.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
My son caused me much pain. And by
extension he caused more pain to
both of us than I care to examine.
But my daughter... She would follow
me to the far corners without
dispute. I would hope that a bond
between you, between us, might
prevent these troubles from
recurring.

Charles looks to Catherine. Hal looks to her also.

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)
It is most uncanny, and yet not so
at all, that the great movements of
history so frequently find their
origins in the minutia of family.
(MORE)

KING CHARLES VI (CONT'D)

That in ways I dare not unsettle
here I must only assume that my
relationship with my son, and yours
with your father - these are the
things that have led us here today.
We are leaders of lands and of
peoples and yet it is family that
moves us. Family consumes us.

EXT. SHIP - DAY

Hal sits alone at the ship's bow. He looks out to sea, at his
fleet returning home. The weather is clear and calm. All is
strangely quiet. William approaches.

WILLIAM

My liege.

He takes a seat beside Hal.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

How do you feel?

HAL

Tired.

WILLIAM

My condolences to you for the loss
of Sir John. I know you must feel
this loss deeply.

HAL

Thank you, William. Your loyalty to
me has been comforting.

WILLIAM

It is my honour and duty, my liege.

HAL

It would seem comfort is a valuable
commodity to a man in my position.

WILLIAM

You have proved yourself a most
worthy king. I should say that
already you have proven yourself to
be one of England's great kings.

Hal nods. A tired smile. He looks out to sea. He is a victorious
warrior and king.

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal is dressed in finery. He stands alone at the window, listening to a huge crowd outside.

The Lord Chamberlain enters.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
My liege. A crowd has gathered.

HAL
So I see.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
Shall I escort you to the east wing?

HAL
No. I will be ready shortly.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
As you wish, Your Majesty.

The Lord Chamberlain exits. Hal stands thinking a moment longer. He seems calm. He turns and heads for the door.

INT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal walks the hall. Aides bow as he passes unexpectedly.

INT. BEDCHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Princess Catherine is attended by ladies-in-waiting. There is a KNOCK at the door.

LADY-IN-WAITING
Enter.

Hal enters. He closes the door behind him and bows.

CATHERINE
(to her aides)
Veuillez nous laisser.

The aides file out of the room. Catherine is seated.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
(in French, subtitled)
Please sit, Your Majesty.

Hal approaches hesitantly and sits opposite Catherine.

HAL
 (in French, subtitled)
 You are beautiful.

CATHERINE
 Merci.

HAL
 (in French, subtitled)
 I will no longer speak French. We
 must speak English.

CATHERINE
 (in French, subtitled)
 I cannot speak English.

HAL
 (in French, subtitled)
 You will learn.

CATHERINE
 (in French, subtitled)
 I wonder, then, how our union might
 proceed in the meantime.

Beat.

HAL
 There is much I wonder about a
 great many things.

CATHERINE
 (in English)
 Indeed there must be for you to
 contemplate marriage to a woman
 about whom you know so little.

Hal is caught off guard. She watches him a moment.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
 I will not submit to you. You must
 earn my respect. I am not my
 father. My father is old and tired
 and he no longer has the will to
 fight. But I am young and I have
 that will in abundance. This is the
 woman you have chosen to take as
 your wife.

Hal looks at her, still befuddled.

HAL
 I understand that.

CATHERINE

Do you?

HAL

I do.

CATHERINE

Do you feel a sense of achievement?

HAL

In what regard?

CATHERINE

In any regard.

Hal looks at her. He wasn't expecting to be challenged.

HAL

I have achieved that which my father never could. I have united this kingdom in common cause.

CATHERINE

You have achieved momentary respite. A unity forged under false pretense will never be a unity that prevails.

Hal is taken aback, but engaged by Catherine.

HAL

How, pray, have my endeavours been forged falsely?

CATHERINE

Why did you bring war to France?

HAL

Your father came on spoiling.

CATHERINE

How so? How was he spoiling?

HAL

He sent an assassin.

CATHERINE

There was no assassin. There was no plot to kill you.

HAL

And how might you be sure?

CATHERINE

Because I was with my father when he received word of your charge. I know him well enough to know his reaction to be genuine.

HAL

How was his reaction?

CATHERINE

He laughed. He laughed very much. He said you must be drunk.

HAL

Your father is a madman.

CATHERINE

He may be mad, but he is true. His madness makes him true. He says only what he believes. That is why he is loved.

Hal's demeanour starts to shift, darken.

HAL

The assassin then was sent by your brother.

CATHERINE

My brother? My brother was too stupid to conjure such a plan. For all of his failings, he was not one to send a killer in his stead. He preferred to do his killing himself. What was your true reason?

HAL

Did you know of the ball he sent? The ball that he sent to me?

CATHERINE

He sent to you a ball?

Beat. She lets this hang. Hal shifts uncomfortably.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

He sent to you a ball... Is that why you have -

HAL

Why should you question my intent? Your father's rule is illegitimate. He has no right claim to his -

CATHERINE

All monarchy is illegitimate. You yourself are the son of a usurper.

Hal sits, thinking, darkening.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

It would seem that you have no explanation for what you have done. You have shed the blood of so many Christian souls and yet before me now I see only a young and vain and foolish man, so easily riled and so easily beguiled.

Hal is staring at her now. His thoughts are splintering.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Have you contemplated this? Have you contemplated the ambitions of the men around you?

Still no response from Hal.

Hal and Catherine stare at each other. She isn't sure how Hal will react - she expects opprobrium. She knows she has spoken provocatively. Instead Hal responds with unsettling calm.

HAL

I must leave you now.

He stands and bows. She nods cautiously. Hal exits.

INT. ANTECHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal walks the hall briskly, his head swimming. More nervous genuflection from aides caught off guard by his passing.

He rounds a corner, down a hall, his eyes fixed and cold. He reaches a door. He opens it without pausing or knocking.

INT. WILLIAM'S CHAMBER / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal enters. William is standing on a little stool, having his gaudy ceremonial robes lint-brushed by a pageboy.

WILLIAM

(sprightly)
My liege.

Hal closes the door behind him. He sits in a chair by the door and watches William who looks at himself in a mirror.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You must be sure to revel in this day. A crowd gathered to honour victory. These are the rare moments for which a king lives.

Beat. Hal tries to still his swirling thoughts.

HAL

In all my preoccupation, I have neglected to ask after your family.

WILLIAM

Your preoccupations are hardly trifling, my liege.

HAL

You have two sons.

WILLIAM

I do.

HAL

And your wife minds your estate in your absence.

WILLIAM

She does. Yes.

HAL

Yours is sheep. You're a man of wool.

WILLIAM

I am. As my father was before me.

HAL

How many head?

WILLIAM

Some four thousand at last count. Mostly Dorset horns.

HAL

How much land have you?

WILLIAM

To be true, I'm not wholly certain. Many hundreds of beautiful acres.

HAL

What lands in France have you now annexed?

A pause. William looking at himself in the mirror.

WILLIAM

I'm not sure I understand, my liege.

HAL

Now that France is ours, how much of her land is now yours?

WILLIAM

My liege?

HAL

Her farming land, her sheep grazing land. How much of it is now yours?

William is troubled by the course Hal's enquiry has taken.

WILLIAM

This has yet to be determined. Our conquest is so recent. Why do you ask, my liege?

Hal watches William, contempt brewing.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

My liege?

William moves to step down off his little stool.

HAL

Don't move. Stay up there.

Hal stares at him. William steps back onto his little stool.

The pageboy can clearly sense the tension. He sits back, on the floor, and tries to make himself invisible.

HAL (CONT'D)

How did my assassin come to you?

WILLIAM

(flustered)

I am afraid I do not understand your meaning.

HAL

My question is simple. You brought the assassin to my attention. Under what circumstances did he come to yours?

WILLIAM

I, I fail to remember at this moment.

HAL
Remedy this failure.

WILLIAM
I, ah, let me recall... So much has happened in the intervening months.

HAL
An event so pivotal should be amply equipped to penetrate the fog of time elapsed.

WILLIAM
Yes, of course. Let me recall...

HAL
Was it in the street? Did he come to you in the street?

WILLIAM
Yes. Yes, he did. He approached me in the street, most unusually. My liege, please tell me the cause of this concern.

William moves again to step off his little stool.

HAL
Stay up there.

William shuffles awkwardly back on to the stool.

HAL (CONT'D)
He came to you in the street. Did he know your name?

WILLIAM
I, ah, I do not believe he did.

HAL
How then did he know who you were to approach?

WILLIAM
I, ah, I'm not certain. Perchance... But, no, give me pause - the memory is returning. Of course. He surrendered himself to a palace guard and the matter was brought to my attention and I was then taken to him in his cell.

HAL

So he did not meet you in the street.

WILLIAM

No. It was not in the street. Forgive me. I was summoned to the cells to interrogate the wretch. He had already surrendered himself.

Hal stares at him. William squirms.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

My liege, please. Has a problem arisen?

HAL

Yes. A problem has arisen. And it wobbles before me now on its silly little stool at mine own elevation.

WILLIAM

My liege. I don't understand.

HAL

Stop this charade now.

WILLIAM

Sincerely, I don't -

HAL

(yelling)
STOP THIS FUCKING CHARADE!

WILLIAM

(explodes)
I have given you what you wanted, boy! Have I not?!

William and Hal breathe, shocked at their own respective outbursts. Everything has changed.

William steps off his stool and goes the window.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You wanted peace. This is how peace is forged. It is forged in victory.

The crowd noise outside swells. William points to the window.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Listen. Do you hear it?

He and Hal listen to the crowd.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
That is the sound of peace.

Hal watches him then drops his head. William steps gently toward him.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
That is the sound of peace.

Hal looks up, defeated, lonely. William extends his arms.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
That is the sound of your
greatness.

William takes Hal's head gently in his hands. Hal lets himself be mollified. William smiles.

William lowers himself and genuflects. He bows with reverence and rests his forehead on Hal's knee.

Hal lets it sit there a moment, and then - he takes the ends of the scarf draped across William's shoulders and pulls them tight around William's throat.

William struggles immediately. He writhes and kicks as Hal chokes him.

Hal's grip is deathly strong. His eyes glaze with venom. As William thrashes, Hal stares coldly ahead, at the pageboy, kneeling motionless and staring at the floor.

William takes a long time to die. Eventually his writhing slows. And then stops.

Hal drops him like a sack to the floor.

Hal breathes. He stands and exits.

OMITTED

INT. OFFICE / ROYAL COURT - DAY

Hal enters the office which is now full of courtiers - among them Dorset and Westmorland. The crowd outside is loud.

As Hal enters, all present bow. He stands and surveys the room. He surveys the people in it, genuflecting before him.

Catherine is there. He goes to her. She watches his approach. She can see that something has shifted in him.

Hal holds his hand out to her. She takes it cautiously.

HAL

(quiet, only for her)

I ask nothing of you other than
that you will always speak to me
clear and true. Always. Will you
promise me only that?

She looks at him, gently searching his face.

CATHERINE

I will.

He leads her to the balcony.

As they step out, into the blinding light, the crowd roars.

THE END