



Falstaff: A Novel

Robert Nye

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Winner of the Hawthornden Prize and the Guardian Fiction Prize

The most beloved comic figure in English literature decides that history hasn't done him justice—it's time for him to tell the whole unbuttoned story, his way. Irascible and still lecherous at eighty-one, Falstaff spins out these outrageously bawdy memoirs as an antidote to legend, and in the process manages to recreate his own. This splendidly written novel is a feast, opening wide the look and feel of another age and bringing Shakespeare's Falstaff to life in a totally new way. Like Jack Falstaff himself, it's sprawling, vivid, oversized—big as life. We return in an instant to an England that was ribald, violent, superstitious, coursing with high spirits and a fresh sense of national purpose. We see what history and the Bard of Avon overlooked or avoided: what really happened that celebrated night at the windmill when Falstaff and Justice Shallow heard the chimes at midnight; who really killed Hotspur; how many men fell at the Battle of Agincourt; what actually transpired at the coronation of Henry V ("Harry the Prig"); and just what it was that made the wives of Windsor so very merry.

Falstaff "tells all" about Prince Hal, John of Gaunt ("that maniac"), Pistol, Bardolph, Doll Tearsheet, and Jane Nightwork. At the same time, his racy narrative offers us a tapestry of the Middle Ages: the Black Death and May Day; an expedition to Ireland and a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; nights at the Boar's Head; the splendor of London Bridge; and hundreds of other sights and sounds and people zestfully recalled between scabrous opinions and irreverent meditations—in sum, the very flavor of a great age. The voice is unmistakably Falstaff's and his great drama swaggers, laughs, and shouts across every page.

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