

Henry VI Part 1 abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

History

Situation: While mourning the death of the late Henry V, the English nobles learn that in France the Dauphin has quietly in Reims been crowned King Charles VII, and that John Talbot has been captured at Orleans, Talbot being the leader of the English forces in France.

MESSENGER: My gracious lords, I must inform you of a dismal fight betwixt the stout Lord Talbot and the French.

WINCHESTER: What! Wherein Talbot overcame? Is't so?

MESSENGER: Oh no. The circumstance I'll tell you more at large.

Messenger to the Nobles

**On August tenth, Lord Talbot, retiring
From his men's siege of Orleans, having
But six thousand troops, was round encompassed
And set upon by twenty-three thousand
French. He had no leisure as his men pitched
Pikes confusedly. The fight ensued and
Valiant Talbot above all human thought
Displayed wonders with his sword as he fought
Hundreds of French. The conquest was fully
Sealed up, if Sir John Fastolfe had not broke
Ranks, he to relieve and follow, but he
Cowardly fled, not having struck one stroke.
Enclosed were they in the general wrack
When a foe thrust a spear into his back.**

BEDFORD: Is Talbot slain?

MESSENGER: Oh, no, he lives but is took prisoner.

BEDFORD: His ransom there is none but I shall pay. I'll hale the Dauphin headlong from his throne. His crown shall be the ransom of my friend. Ten thousand soldiers with me I will take, whose bloody deeds shall make all Europe quake.

MESSENGER: So you had need: for Orleans is besieged; the English army is grown weak and faint. The Earl of Salisbury craveth supply.