

Luigi Pirandello



Henry IV

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CHARACTERS.

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"HENRY IV."
THE MARCHIONESS MATILDA SPINA.
HER DAUGHTER FRIDA.
THE YOUNG MARQUIS CHARLES DI NOLLI.
BARON TITO BELCREDI.
DOCTOR DIONYSIUS GENONI.

THE FOUR PRIVATE COUNSELLORS:
(The names in brackets are nicknames).
HAROLD (FRANK),
LANDOLPH (LOLO),
ORDULPH (MOMO),
BERTHOLD (FINO).

JOHN, THE OLD WAITER.
THE TWO VALETS IN COSTUME.

A SOLITARY VILLA IN ITALY IN OUR OWN TIME.

ACT I

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Salon in the villa, furnished and decorated so as to look exactly like the throne room of Henry IV. in the royal residence at Goslar. Among the antique decorations there are two modern life-size portraits in oil painting. They are placed against the back wall, and mounted in a wooden stand that runs the whole length of the wall. (It is wide and protrudes, so that it is like a large bench). One of the paintings is on the right; the other on the left of the throne, which is in the middle of the wall and divides the stand.

The Imperial chair and Baldachin.

The two portraits represent a lady and a gentleman, both young, dressed up in carnival costumes: one as "Henry IV.," the other as the "Marchioness Matilda of Tuscany." Exits to Right and Left.

(When the curtain goes up, the two valets jump down, as if surprised, from the stand on which they have been lying, and go and take their positions, as rigid as statues, on either side below the throne with their halberds in their hands. Soon after, from the second exit, right, enter Harold, Landolph, Ordulph and Berthold, young men employed by the Marquis Charles Di Nolli to play the part of "Secret Counsellors" at the court of "Henry IV." They are, therefore, dressed like German knights of the XIth century. Berthold, nicknamed Fino, is just entering on his duties for the first time. His companions are telling him what he has to do and amusing themselves at his expense. The scene is to be played rapidly and vivaciously).

LANDOLPH (*to Berthold as if explaining*). And this is the throne room.

HAROLD. At Goslar.

ORDULPH. Or at the castle in the Hartz, if you prefer.

HAROLD. Or at Wurms.

LANDOLPH. According as to what's doing, it jumps about with us, now here, now there.

ORDULPH. In Saxony.

HAROLD. In Lombardy.

LANDOLPH. On the Rhine.

ONE OF THE VALETS (*without moving, just opening his lips*). I say...

HAROLD (*turning round*). What is it?

FIRST VALET (*like a statue*). Is he coming in or not? (*He alludes to Henry IV.*)

ORDULPH. No, no, he's asleep. You needn't worry.

SECOND VALET (*releasing his pose, taking a long breath and going to lie down again on the stand*). You might have told us at once.

FIRST VALET (*going over to Harold*). Have you got a match, please?

LANDOLPH. What? You can't smoke a pipe here, you know.

FIRST VALET (*while Harold offers him a light*). No; a cigarette. (*Lights his cigarette and lies down again on the stand*).

BERTHOLD (*who has been looking on in amazement, walking round the room, regarding the costumes of the others*). I say...this room... these costumes...Which Henry IV.

is it? I don't quite get it. Is he Henry IV. of France or not? (*At this Landolph, Harold, and Ordulph, burst out laughing*).

LANDOLPH (*still laughing; and pointing to Berth old as if inviting the others to make fun of him*). Henry of France he says: ha! ha! ORDULPH. He thought it was the king of France!

HAROLD. Henry IV. of Germany, my boy: the Salian dynasty!

ORDULPH. The great and tragic Emperor!

LANDOLPH. He of Canossa. Every day we carry on here the terrible war between Church and State, by Jove.

ORDULPH. The Empire against the Papacy!

HAROLD. Antipopes against the Pope!

LANDOLPH. Kings against antikings!

ORDULPH. War on the Saxons!

HAROLD. And all the rebels Princes!

LANDOLPH. Against the Emperor's own sons!

BERTHOLD (*covering his head with his hands to protect himself against this avalanche of information*). I understand! I understand! Naturally, I didn't get the idea at first. I'm right then: these aren't costumes of the XVIth century?

HAROLD. XVIth century be hanged!

ORDULPH. We're somewhere between a thousand and eleven hundred.

LANDOLPH. Work it out for yourself: if we are before Canossa on the 25th of January, 1071...

BERTHOLD (*more confused than ever*). Oh my God! What a mess I've made of it!

ORDULPH. Well, just slightly, if you supposed you were at the French court.

BERTHOLD. All that historical stuff I've swatted up!

LANDOLPH. My dear boy, it's four hundred years earlier.

BERTHOLD (*getting angry*). Good Heavens! You ought to have told me it was Germany and not France. I can't tell you how many books I've read in the last fifteen days.

HAROLD. But I say, surely you knew that poor Tito was Adalbert of Bremen, here?

BERTHOLD. Not a damned bit!

LANDOLPH. Well, don't you see how it is? When Tito died, the Marquis Di Nolli...

BERTHOLD. Oh, it was he, was it? He might have told me.

HAROLD. Perhaps he thought you knew.

LANDOLPH. He didn't want to engage anyone else in substitution. He thought the remaining three of us would do. But he began to cry out: "With Adalbert driven away...": because, you see, he didn't imagine poor Tito was dead; but that, as Bishop Adalbert, the rival bishops of Cologne and Mayence had driven him off...

BERTHOLD (*taking his head in his hand*). But I don't know a word of what you're talking about.

ORDULPH. So much the worse for you, my boy!

HAROLD. But the trouble is that not even we know who you are.

BERTHOLD. What? Not even you? You don't know who I'm supposed to be?

ORDULPH. Hum! "Berthold."

BERTHOLD. But which Berthold? And why Berthold?

LANDOLPH (*solemnly imitating Henry IV.*). "They've driven Adalbert away from me. Well then, I want Berthold! I want Berthold !" That's what he said.