

RICHARD III

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester, solus

RICHARD

Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer by this son of York,
 And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
 In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

5 Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
 Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
 Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
 Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
 Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front;

10 And now, instead of mounting barbèd steeds
 To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
 He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
 To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
 Nor made to court an amorous looking glass;
 I, that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
 I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,

20 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—
 Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
 Have no delight to pass away the time,
 Unless to see my shadow in the sun
 And descant on mine own deformity.

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
 I am determinèd to prove a villain
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
 Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
 To set my brother Clarence and the king

35 In deadly hate, the one against the other;
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
 About a prophecy which says that "G"
 40 Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
 Dive, thoughts, down to my soul. Here Clarence comes.

Enter CLARENCE, guarded, and BRAKENBURY

Brother, good day. What means this armèd guard
 That waits upon your Grace?

CLARENCE

His majesty,
 45 Tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed
 This conduct to convey me to the Tower.

RICHARD

Upon what cause?

Shakescleare Translation

RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester, enters alone.

RICHARD

Now the winter of our troubles has been transformed into glorious summer by the ascension of my brother, King Edward IV, [son 1](#) of the house of York. All the clouds that had descended over our family have now been banished and returned to the sea. Now we wear wreaths of victory on our foreheads, and we've hung up our armor as decoration. We've exchanged the sound of our battle trumpets for the sound of joyful greetings, and our death marches have become stately dances. The grim, warlike expressions on our faces have smoothed. And instead of charging on armored horses to frighten our opponents, we now dance in ladies' chambers to seductive songs on the lute. But as for me, I am not made for such games of love, or to admire myself in a mirror. I was badly made, and I lack the good looks to strut in front of passing girls. Nature has cheated me out of handsome features and proper proportions. I was born [deformed 2](#), unfinished, and born prematurely. I was barely half-created when I came into the world, and left so lame and misshapen that dogs bark at me as I limp past them. In such delicate times of peace, I have nothing to do. No joys help me pass the time, unless I want to see my own shadow in the sun and make speeches about my deformity. Therefore, since I cannot amuse myself by being a lover during these peaceful days, I am determined to become a villain. I have hatched plots and put dangerous plans into action, using prophecies made while drunk; slander; and stories about dreams in order to set my brother George, Duke of Clarence, against my other brother, the king, so that they hate each other. If King Edward is as true as I am clever, false, and treacherous, then this very day Clarence will be imprisoned because of a prophecy that "[G 3](#)" will murder Edward's children. But, you thoughts, [hide 4](#) yourselves deep down in my soul, for here comes Clarence.

CLARENCE, surrounded by guards, and BRAKENBURY enter.

Good day, brother. Why do you have all these armed guards accompanying you, [your Grace 4](#)?

CLARENCE

His Majesty was so concerned for my personal safety that he appointed this escort to conduct me to the [Tower. 5](#)

RICHARD

You're being arrested? For what reason?

[1](#) One of Shakespeare's most well-known puns, Richard plays on the similarity in sound between

[2](#) Richard is often portrayed as having a hump on his back. The historical Richard suffered from severe spinal scoliosis.

[3](#) King Edward assumes that "G" refers to his brother George, Duke of Clarence. But ironically it could also mean Richard, Duke of Gloucester.

[4](#) "Your Grace" is an honorific title for nobility or royalty, similar to "Your Highness" or "Your Majesty."

[5](#) Clarence is being sarcastic, as he is in fact being sent for imprisonment in the Tower of London--a notorious prison for political detainees.

CLARENCE

Because my name is George.

RICHARD

Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours.
 50 He should, for that, commit your godfathers.
 O, belike his majesty hath some intent
 That you shall be new christened in the Tower.
 But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

CLARENCE

Yea, Richard, when I know, for I protest
 55 As yet I do not. But, as I can learn,
 He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
 And from the crossrow plucks the letter "G",
 And says a wizard told him that by "G"
 His issue disinherited should be.
 60 And for my name of George begins with "G",
 It follows in his thought that I am he.
 These, as I learn, and such like toys as these
 Have moved his Highness to commit me now.

RICHARD

Why, this it is when men are ruled by women.
 65 'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower.
 My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
 That tempers him to this extremity.
 Was it not she and that good man of worship,
 Anthony Woodeville, her brother there,
 70 That made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower,
 From whence this present day he is delivered?
 We are not safe, Clarence. We are not safe.

CLARENCE

By heaven, I think there is no man is secure
 But the queen's kindred and night-walking heralds
 75 That trudge betwixt the king and Mistress Shore.
 Heard ye not what an humble suppliant
 Lord Hastings was to her for his delivery?

RICHARD

Humbly complaining to her deity
 Got my Lord Chamberlain his liberty.
 80 I'll tell you what: I think it is our way,
 If we will keep in favor with the king,
 To be her men and wear her livery.
 The jealous o'erworn widow and herself,
 Since that our brother dubbed them gentlewomen,
 85 Are mighty gossips in this monarchy.

BRAKENBURY

I beseech your Graces both to pardon me.
 His majesty hath straitly given in charge
 That no man shall have private conference,
 Of what degree soever, with his brother.

RICHARD

Even so. An please your Worship, Brakenbury,
 You may partake of anything we say.
 We speak no treason, man. We say the king
 Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
 Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous.
 95 We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
 A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue,
 And that the queen's kindred are made gentlefolks.
 How say you, sir? Can you deny all this?

BRAKENBURY

With this, my lord, myself have naught to do.

CLARENCE

Because my name is George.

RICHARD

Alas, my lord, that's no fault of yours. If that's the problem,
 then our brother, the king, should arrest those who named
 you instead. Or maybe his Majesty intends to baptize you
 and rename you in the Tower. But what's the reason for
 this, Clarence? Will you tell me?

CLARENCE

Yes, Richard, I'll inform you when I know—but right now I
 have no idea. As far as I can tell, the king has been putting a
 lot of trust in prophecies and dreams lately. And he picked
 the letter "G" from the alphabet, and says that a wizard told
 him that "G" will steal the throne from his children. And my
 name, George, begins with "G," so he thinks that the
 prophecy refers to me. Because of this, along with other
 trivial reasons, his Highness feels compelled to arrest me.


RICHARD

Well, this is what happens when men are ruled by women.
 It isn't the king who's sending you to the Tower—it's his
 wife, Lady Elizabeth Grey. She's the one who persuaded
 him to take such an extreme action. Didn't she and her
 brother, Anthony Woodeville, make the king send Lord
 Hastings to the Tower? He was released only today. We are
 not safe, Clarence. We are not safe.

CLARENCE

By heaven, I think the only people who *are* safe are the
 queen's relatives, and the secret messengers who travel
 between the king and his mistress, Jane Shore. Didn't you
 hear how Lord Hastings had to beg Miss Shore in order to
 get released?


RICHARD

Yes, Lord Hastings gained his liberty by humbly bowing
 down to that goddess . I'll tell you what: if we want to
 stay in the king's favor, it would be best if we act like Miss
 Shore's servants too. Ever since our brother declared that
 Miss Shore and the queen are nobility, they've become
 great gossips in the court.


BRAKENBURY


I beg your pardon, your Graces. His Majesty the king has
 strictly ordered that no one can speak privately with your
 brother Clarence, no matter their social rank.


RICHARD


Is that so? If it please your Worship , Brakenbury, you can
 listen to anything we say. We're not plotting any treason,
 man. We say that the king is wise and virtuous, and his
 noble queen is well advanced in years, beautiful, and not
 jealous. We say that Mister Shore's wife has pretty feet,
 cherry lips, lovely eyes, and a pleasant voice. We say that
 the queen's relatives have all become nobles. What do you
 say to that, sir? Can you deny any of this?

BRAKENBURY

I have naught  to do with this, my lord.

 Richard uses this word
sarcastically in his disdain for Jane
Shore.

 "Your Worship" is an honorific
title for a high-ranking official.

 Naught means "nothing," but it
can also refer to sex, which is how
Richard interprets it in his next line.

RICHARD

100 Naught to do with Mistress Shore? I tell thee, fellow,
He that doth naught with her, excepting one,
Were best he do it secretly, alone.

BRAKENBURY

What one, my lord?

RICHARD

Her husband, knave. Wouldst thou betray me?

BRAKENBURY

105 I do beseech your Grace to pardon me, and withal
Forbear your conference with the noble duke.

CLARENCE

We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.

RICHARD

We are the queen's objects and must obey.—
Brother, farewell. I will unto the king,
110 And whatsoe'er you will employ me in,
Were it to call King Edward's widow "sister,"
I will perform it to enfranchise you.
Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
Touches me deeper than you can imagine.

CLARENCE

115 I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

RICHARD

Well, your imprisonment shall not be long.
I will deliver you or else lie for you.
Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE

I must performe. Farewell.

Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and guard

RICHARD

120 Go tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return.
Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so
That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
If heaven will take the present at our hands.
But who comes here? The new-delivered Hastings?

Enter HASTINGS

HASTINGS

125 Good time of day unto my gracious lord.

RICHARD

As much unto my good Lord Chamberlain.
Well are you welcome to the open air.
How hath your lordship brooked imprisonment?

HASTINGS

130 With patience, noble lord, as prisoners must.
But I shall live, my lord, to give them thanks
That were the cause of my imprisonment.

RICHARD

No doubt, no doubt; and so shall Clarence too,
For they that were your enemies are his
And have prevailed as much on him as you.

HASTINGS

135 More pity that the eagle should be mewed
While kites and buzzards prey at liberty.

RICHARD

"Naught" to do with Miss Shore? I tell you, fellow, there's
only one man who can do "naught" with her. And if anyone
else is doing it, he'd best do it secretly.

BRAKENBURY

Who is that, my lord?

RICHARD

Her husband, fool. Are you going to tell on me?

BRAKENBURY

I beg your Grace to forgive me, and now please stop talking
to the Duke of Clarence.

CLARENCE

We know your orders, Brakenbury. And we'll obey.

RICHARD

We are the queen's lowly subjects, and we must obey.
Farewell, brother. I will go to the king and do whatever you
need me to do to get you released, even if it means calling
King Edward's wife ⁹ "sister." And just so you know, our
brother's disgraceful conduct towards you upsets me more
than you can imagine.

⁹ In the original text, Richard alludes to the fact that Lady Elizabeth Grey was a widow (with two children) when Edward married her.

CLARENCE

I know it doesn't make either of us very happy.

RICHARD

Well, your imprisonment won't be for long. I'll free you, or
else go to prison in your place. In the meantime, have
patience.

CLARENCE

I have no choice in the matter. Farewell.

CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and the guards exit.

RICHARD

Go, walk down the path from which you'll never return.
Stupid, plain Clarence, I love you so much that I'll soon
send your soul to heaven—if heaven will accept any
presents from me. But who's this coming? The newly
released Hastings?

HASTINGS enters.

HASTINGS

Good day to you, my gracious lord.

RICHARD

And the same to you, my good Lord Chamberlain ¹⁰.
Welcome back to the open air. How have you tolerated
imprisonment?

¹⁰ Hastings was Lord Chamberlain—the most senior officer in the royal household.

HASTINGS

With patience, as all prisoners must, noble lord. But I will
live to thank those who imprisoned me, my lord, by taking
revenge.

RICHARD

No doubt, no doubt. And so will Clarence, for the people
who were your enemies are now his enemies, and they've
overcome him just like they overcame you.

HASTINGS

It's a pity that the eagles should be caged while the
buzzards are free to hunt.

RICHARD

What news abroad?

HASTINGS

No news so bad abroad as this at home:
The king is sickly, weak and melancholy,
140 And his physicians fear him mightily.

RICHARD

Now, by Saint Paul, that news is bad indeed.
O, he hath kept an evil diet long,
And overmuch consumed his royal person.
'Tis very grievous to be thought upon.
145 Where is he, in his bed?

HASTINGS

He is.

RICHARD

Go you before, and I will follow you.

Exit HASTINGS

He cannot live, I hope, and must not die
Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven.
150 I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence
With lies well steeled with weighty arguments,
And, if I fail not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live;
Which done, God take King Edward to His mercy,
155 And leave the world for me to bustle in.
For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
What though I killed her husband and her father?
The readiest way to make the wench amend
Is to become her husband and her father;
160 The which will I, not all so much for love
As for another secret close intent
By marrying her which I must reach unto.
But yet I run before my horse to market.
Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and reigns.
165 When they are gone, then must I count my gains.

Exit

RICHARD

What's the news from outside the country?

HASTINGS

There's no foreign news as bad as the news at home: the
king is sickly, weak, and depressed, and his physicians fear
for his life.

RICHARD

By Saint Paul, that is bad news indeed. Oh, the king has
kept many bad habits all his life, and now they've
consumed his health. It's very sad to think about. Where is
he, in his bed?

HASTINGS

He is.

RICHARD

Then you go ahead, and I will follow you.

HASTINGS exits.

I hope the king won't survive. But he mustn't die until
Clarence is sent off to heaven by the quickest route. I'll go in
and incite the king to more hatred against Clarence, using
lies backed up by sound reasoning. And if I don't fail in my
plan, then Clarence won't live even one more day. Once
that's done, God can take King Edward to heaven as soon as
he wants, and leave the world for me to run around in. For
then I'll marry Warwick's ¹¹ youngest daughter, Lady Anne
Neville. What does it matter that I killed her husband ¹²
and her father? The best way to make it up to the girl is to
become her new husband and father. I'll do that then, not
out of love for her, but because it's part of my secret plan.
But I'm getting ahead of myself. Clarence is still breathing.
Edward still lives and reigns as king. I can only count my
gains when they're dead.

He exits.

¹¹ Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick, was known as the "Kingmaker," having placed two kings on the throne during the Wars of the Roses.

¹² The historical Anne Neville was engaged to Prince Edward, son of King Henry IV--whom King Edward IV deposed.

Act 1, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter the corpse of Henry the Sixth, on a bier, with halberds to guard it, Lady ANNE being the mourner, accompanied by gentlemen

ANNE

Set down, set down your honorable load,
If honor may be shrouded in a hearse,
Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
Th' untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.

They set down the bier

5 Poor key-cold figure of a holy king,
Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster,
Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood,
Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
10 Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughtered son,

Shakescleare Translation

Gentlemen enter carrying the corpse of King Henry VI in an open coffin, with armed guards protecting it. Lady ANNE follows, dressed in mourning clothes, accompanied by TRESSSEL and BERKELEY.

ANNE

Set down, set down your honorable load, men—if honor
can be shrouded in a coffin—while I solemnly mourn the
early death of virtuous Henry ¹¹.

The gentlemen set down the coffin.

Oh, you poor cold corpse of a holy king, you last remains of
the house of Lancaster, you bloodless remnant of that royal
blood! If it's lawful to speak to your ghost, then listen to the
sorrows of poor Anne. My husband was Edward--your
slaughtered son--who was murdered by the same man who
stabbed you. Oh, let me pour my helpless tears into your

¹¹ In the original text, Anne refers to King Henry VI as "Lancaster," the name of the royal house from which he descended. The Lancasters and Yorks (Richard and Edward's family) were rivals during the Wars of the Roses.

Stabbed by the selfsame hand that made these wounds.
 Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life
 I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.
 O, cursèd be the hand that made these holes;
 15 Cursèd the heart that had the heart to do it;
 Cursèd the blood that let this blood from hence.
 More direful hap betide that hated wretch
 That makes us wretched by the death of thee
 Than I can wish to wolves, to spiders, toads,
 20 Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives.
 If ever he have child, abortive be it,
 Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
 Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
 May fright the hopeful mother at the view,
 25 And that be heir to his unhappiness.
 If ever he have wife, let her be made
 More miserable by the death of him
 Than I am made by my poor lord and thee.—
 Come now towards Chertsey with your holy load,
 30 Taken from Paul's to be interrèd there.

They take up the bier

And still, as you are weary of this weight,
 Rest you, whiles I lament King Henry's corse.

Enter RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester

RICHARD

Stay, you that bear the corse, and set it down.

ANNE

35 What black magician conjures up this fiend
 To stop devoted charitable deeds?

RICHARD

Villains, set down the corse or, by Saint Paul,
 I'll make a corse of him that disobeys.

GENTLEMAN

My lord, stand back and let the coffin pass.

RICHARD

Unmannered dog, stand thou when I command!—
 40 Advance thy halberd higher than my breast,
 Or by Saint Paul I'll strike thee to my foot
 And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

They set down the bier

ANNE

[to gentlemen and halberds]

What, do you tremble? Are you all afraid?
 45 Alas, I blame you not, for you are mortal,
 And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.—
 Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell.
 Thou hadst but power over his mortal body;
 His soul thou canst not have. Therefore begone.

RICHARD

50 Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

ANNE

Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble us not,
 For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
 Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclams.
 If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
 55 Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.

She points to the corse

O, gentlemen, see, see dead Henry's wounds
 Open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh!—

wounds, those open windows that let your spirit escape. I
 curse the hand that made these holes in you. I curse the
 heart of the person who had the heart to do it. And I curse
 the blood of the man that shed your blood. I hope evil
 fortunes fall upon that hateful man, the one who killed you
 and now makes me suffer. May his fate be worse than
 anything I would wish on wolves, spiders, toads, or any
 creeping venomous thing that lives. If he ever has a child,
 may it be born premature and unnatural, and may its
 appearance be so ugly and monstrous that even its own
 hopeful mother will fear it. That way, the child will inherit
 your murderer's own unhappiness. And if he ever has a
 wife, may she be more miserable at his death than I am
 now, mourning my husband and you, my father-in-law.

[To gentlemen] Come now, guards, continue on towards
 Chertsey Abbey, where this holy burden—which you picked
 up at Saint Paul's cathedral—will be laid to rest.

They pick up the coffin.

And whenever your burden grows too heavy, rest a while,
 and I will lament over King Henry's corpse.

RICHARD enters.

RICHARD

Stop, you who bear that corpse, and set down your load.

ANNE

What evil magician has conjured up this devil to interrupt
 our sacred burial procession?

RICHARD

You base men, set down the corpse or, I swear by Saint Paul,
 I'll make corpses out of you.

GENTLEMAN

My lord, stand back and let the coffin pass.

RICHARD

Rude dog, halt when I command you to! And raise your
 weapon so it isn't pointing at my chest, or, by Saint Paul, I'll
 strike you down and trample on you for your boldness, you
 beggar.

They put down the coffin.

ANNE

[To the gentlemen and guards] What, do you tremble at the
 sight of him? Are you all afraid? Alas, I don't blame you, for
 you're only mortal, and mortal eyes can't stand to look at
 the devil.

[To RICHARD] Go away, you dreadful servant of hell. You
 only had power over Henry's body; you can't have his soul.
 So go away.

RICHARD

Sweet saint, for goodness's sake, don't be so harsh.

ANNE

Foul devil, for God's sake, go away and leave us alone.
 You've made the pleasant earth into your hell, filling it with
 cursing cries and deep laments. If you enjoy looking at your
 horrible deeds, then behold this example of your butchery.

She points to the corpse.

Oh, gentlemen, see, see! Dead Henry's wounds have
 opened and are bleeding again!

Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity,
 For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
 60 From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells.
 Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
 Provokes this deluge most unnatural.—
 O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death!
 O earth, which this blood drink'st revenge his death!
 65 Either heaven with lightning strike the murderer dead,
 Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick,
 As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood,
 Which his hell-governed arm hath butchered!

RICHARD

Lady, you know no rules of charity,
 70 Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.

ANNE

Villain, thou know'st not law of God nor man.
 No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

RICHARD

But I know none, and therefore am no beast.

ANNE

O, wonderful, when devils tell the truth!

RICHARD

75 More wonderful, when angels are so angry.
 Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,
 Of these supposed crimes to give me leave
 By circumstance but to acquit myself.

ANNE

Vouchsafe, defused infection of a man,
 80 Of these known evils but to give me leave
 By circumstance to curse thy cursed self.

RICHARD

Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have
 Some patient leisure to excuse myself.

ANNE

Fouler than heart can think thee, thou canst make
 85 No excuse current but to hang thyself.

RICHARD

By such despair I should accuse myself.

ANNE

And by despairing shalt thou stand excused
 For doing worthy vengeance on thyself
 That didst unworthy slaughter upon others.

RICHARD

90 Say that I slew them not.

ANNE

Then say they were not slain.
 But dead they are, and devilish slave, by thee.

RICHARD

I did not kill your husband.

ANNE

Why then, he is alive.

RICHARD

95 Nay, he is dead, and slain by Edward's hands.

ANNE

In thy foul throat thou liest. Queen Margaret saw
 Thy murd'rous falchion smoking in his blood,

[To RICHARD] Shame on you, shame on you, you lump of
 foul deformity! It's your presence that draws out this blood
 from his cold and empty veins, where no blood remains.
 Your inhuman and unnatural actions have provoked this
 unnatural flood.

Oh God, who made this blood, revenge Henry's death! Oh
 earth, which soaks up this blood, revenge his death! Either
 heaven strike the murderer dead with lightning, or let the
 earth open wide and eat him quick, just as it swallows this
 good king's blood—the king this devil has butchered!

RICHARD

Lady, you don't know the rules of charity, which transforms
 evil into good, and curses into blessings.

ANNE

Villain, you don't know the laws of God or man. Even the
 fiercest beast has a touch of pity.

RICHARD

But I have no pity, so I must not be a beast.

ANNE

Oh, how amazing to hear a devil tell the truth!

RICHARD

It's more amazing that an angel should be so angry. You
 divinely perfect woman, please allow me to clear myself of
 these crimes of which you've accused me.

ANNE

You shapeless plague of a man, please allow me to curse
 your cursed self for the crimes I know you've committed.

RICHARD

You who are more beautiful than words can say, give me
 some time and let me explain myself.

ANNE

You who are more awful than any heart could believe, the
 only explanation you can give is to go hang yourself.

RICHARD

Such an act of despair would prove my guilt.

ANNE

And such an act of despair would be a worthy act of
 revenge against yourself for slaughtering innocents.

RICHARD

Let's say that I didn't kill them.

ANNE

Then we might as well say that they aren't dead. But, you
 devilish scoundrel, they are dead, and you killed them.

RICHARD

I did not kill your husband.

ANNE

Well then, he must be alive.

RICHARD

No, he is dead, and Edward killed him.

ANNE

You're lying through your teeth. [Queen Margaret](#) saw
 your murderous sword steaming with his blood--the same

[Queen Margaret is King Henry VI's widow.](#)

The which thou once didst bend against her breast,
But that thy brothers beat aside the point.

RICHARD

100 I was provokèd by her sland'rous tongue,
That laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders.

ANNE

Thou wast provokèd by thy bloody mind,
That never dream'st on aught but butcheries.
Didst thou not kill this king?

RICHARD

105 I grant you.

ANNE

Dost grant me, hedgehog? Then, God grant me too
Thou mayst be damnèd for that wicked deed.
O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous.

RICHARD

The better for the King of heaven that hath him.

ANNE

110 He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.

RICHARD

Let him thank me, that help to send him thither,
For he was fitter for that place than earth.

ANNE

And thou unfit for any place but hell.

RICHARD

Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.

ANNE

115 Some dungeon.

RICHARD

Your bedchamber.

ANNE

Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

RICHARD

So will it, madam till I lie with you.

ANNE

I hope so.

RICHARD

120 I know so. But, gentle Lady Anne,
To leave this keen encounter of our wits
And fall something into a slower method—
Is not the causer of the timeless deaths
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
125 As blameful as the executioner?

ANNE

Thou wast the cause and most accursed effect.

RICHARD

Your beauty was the cause of that effect—
Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep
To undertake the death of all the world,
130 So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

sword with which you once tried to kill her. She was only
saved because your brothers restrained you.

RICHARD

I was provoked by her lying tongue, which tried to lay guilt
on my guiltless shoulders.

ANNE

No, you were provoked by your own bloody mind, which
never thinks about anything but butchery. Did you kill this
king?

RICHARD

Yes, I'll grant you that.

ANNE

You'll grant me, you hedgehog? Then let God grant me my
wish that you'll be damned for that wicked deed. Oh, Henry
was gentle, mild, and virtuous.

RICHARD

All the better for God, who has him now.

ANNE

Yes, he's in heaven, where you will never go.

RICHARD

Then let him thank me, who helped him get there. He's
better suited for heaven than for earth.

ANNE

And you're not suited for any place but hell.

RICHARD

Yes, though I'm also suited for one other place, if you'll let
me name it.

ANNE

Some dungeon.

RICHARD

Your bedroom.

ANNE

There will be no rest in any bedroom where you lie!


RICHARD


That's true, madam, until I sleep with you.

ANNE

I hope so—because then you'll never sleep.

RICHARD

I know so. But, dear Lady Anne, let's leave this battle of wits
and move into a calmer, slower conversation. Isn't the
person who caused the untimely deaths of these
Plantagenets —Henry and Edward—as much to blame as
the person who physically committed the murders?

 The Plantagenets were a royal
family who held power in Western
Europe from the 1100s to the 1400s.
Lady Anne's family (the Lancasters)
and Richard's family (the Yorks) are
both branches of the Plantagenets.

ANNE

You are both—the cause and the dreadful effect.

RICHARD

No, your beauty was the cause of my deeds—your beauty
that haunted my sleep, and could have convinced me to kill
the whole world to have just an hour of intimacy with you.

ANNE

If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide,
These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks.

RICHARD

These eyes could never endure that beauty's wrack.
You should not blemish it, if I stood by.
135 As all the world is cheered by the sun,
So I by that. It is my day, my life.

ANNE

Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life.

RICHARD

Curse not thyself, fair creature; thou art both.

ANNE

I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

RICHARD

140 It is a quarrel most unnatural
To be revenged on him that loveth thee.

ANNE

It is a quarrel just and reasonable
To be revenged on him that killed my husband.

RICHARD

145 He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband
Did it to help thee to a better husband.

ANNE

His better doth not breathe upon the earth.

RICHARD

He lives that loves thee better than he could.

ANNE

Name him.

RICHARD

Plantagenet.

ANNE

150 Why, that was he.

RICHARD

The selfsame name, but one of better nature.

ANNE

Where is he?

RICHARD

Here.

She spitteth at him

Why dost thou spit at me?

ANNE

155 Would it were mortal poison for thy sake.

RICHARD

Never came poison from so sweet a place.

ANNE

If I believed you, murderer, then I tell you that I would
scratch the beauty from my cheeks with my fingernails.

RICHARD

I couldn't stand to see you ruin your beauty. I would stop
you if you tried to blemish it. Your beauty encourages me
like the sun encourages the whole world. Your beauty is my
day, my life.

ANNE

Then may black night overshadow your day, and death take
your life.

RICHARD

Beautiful lady, don't curse yourself, since you are both my
day and my life.

ANNE

I wish I were, so I could have some power to take revenge
and kill you.

RICHARD

It's unnatural to want to take revenge on the man who loves
you.

ANNE

It's just and reasonable to want to take revenge on the man
who killed my husband.

RICHARD

Lady, the man who robbed you of your husband did it to
help you find a better husband.

ANNE

There is no better man on earth than my husband.

RICHARD

But there is one man who loves you better than your
husband could.

ANNE

Name him.

RICHARD

Plantagenet.

ANNE

Yes, that's my husband's name.

RICHARD

I mean someone with the same name, but a better
personality.

ANNE

Where is he?

RICHARD

Right here.

ANNE spits at him.

Why do you spit at me?

ANNE

I wish my spit were deadly poison.

RICHARD

Poison never came from so sweet a place.

ANNE

Never hung poison on a fouler toad.
Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes.

RICHARD

Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

ANNE

160 Would they were basilisks to strike thee dead.

RICHARD

I would they were, that I might die at once,
For now they kill me with a living death.
Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears,
Shamed their aspect with store of childish drops.
165 These eyes, which never shed remorseful tear—
No, when my father York and Edward wept
To hear the piteous moan that Rutland made
When black-faced Clifford shook his sword at him;
Nor when thy warlike father, like a child,
170 Told the sad story of my father's death
And twenty times made pause to sob and weep,
That all the standers-by had wet their cheeks
Like trees bedashed with rain—in that sad time,
My manly eyes did scorn an humble tear;
175 And what these sorrows could not thence exhale
Thy beauty hath, and made them blind with weeping.
I never sued to friend, nor enemy;
My tongue could never learn sweet smoothing word.
But now thy beauty is proposed my fee,
180 My proud heart sues, and prompts my tongue to speak.

She looks scornfully at him

Teach not thy lip such scorn, for it were made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.
If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
185 Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast
And let the soul forth that adareth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke
And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

He kneels and lays his breast open; she offers at it with his sword

190 Nay, do not pause; for I did kill King Henry—
But 'twas thy beauty that provokèd me.
Nay, now dispatch; 'twas I that stabbed young Edward—
But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

She falls the sword

Take up the sword again, or take up me.

ANNE

195 Arise, dissembler. Though I wish thy death,
I will not be the executioner.

RICHARD

[rising] Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it.

ANNE

I have already.

RICHARD

That was in thy rage.
Speak it again and, even with the word,
200 This hand, which for thy love did kill thy love,
Shall for thy love kill a far truer love.
To both their deaths shalt thou be accessory.

ANNE

Poison never fell onto a fouler toad. Get out of my sight!
You're infecting my eyes.

RICHARD

Sweet lady, your eyes have infected mine with love.

ANNE

I wish they were basilisks ⁴, so they could strike you dead.

⁴ Basilisks are mythical reptiles who can kill with a look.

RICHARD

I wish they were, so I could die at once. For right now your eyes are killing me with a living death. Your eyes have drawn salty tears from my eyes, making me weep shamefully like a child. My eyes have never cried like this before—not even when my father York and my brother Edward wept at the death of my brother Rutland, who was slaughtered by the gloomy Clifford ⁵. And when your warlike father told the sad story of my father's death, and had to pause twenty times to sob and weep like a child, so that all the bystanders' cheeks ended up as wet as trees in a rainstorm—even in that sad time I didn't shed a single tear. All these sorrows couldn't produce tears in me, but your beauty has blinded me with weeping. I never begged a friend or enemy or learned the art of flattery, but if your beauty is the reward, then I'll flatter and beg as much as I have to.

⁵ Clifford, the Earl of Rutland's murderer, supported the Lancasters--Lady Anne's family.

ANNE looks scornfully at him.

Don't teach your lips to curl so scornfully—they were made for kissing, lady, not for such contempt. If your vengeful heart cannot forgive me, then here, take my sharp-pointed sword and bury it in my chest. That way my soul, which adores you, can be free. I lay myself open to being killed, and in fact, I humbly beg for death on my knees.

He kneels and opens his shirt to expose his chest. She prepares to thrust at it with his sword.

No, don't pause. For I did kill King Henry—though your beauty provoked me to do it. Now go ahead. I was the one who stabbed young Edward ⁶—though your heavenly face that drove me to it.

⁶ Here, Richard refers to Anne's husband (and Henry VI's son) Edward, not to be confused with Richard's brother, King Edward IV.

She drops the sword.

Take up the sword again, or else take me.

ANNE

Stand up, liar. Though I wish you were dead, I won't be your executioner.

RICHARD

[Standing up] Then tell me to kill myself, and I will do it.

ANNE

I have already.

RICHARD

You said it in a rage. Say it again, and as soon as you finish speaking, my hand—which killed your lover out of love for you--will kill your far truer lover. You will be the cause of both these deaths.

ANNE

I would I knew thy heart.

RICHARD

'Tis figured in my tongue.

ANNE

205 I fear me both are false.

RICHARD

Then never man was man true.

ANNE

Well, well, put up your sword.

RICHARD

Say then my peace is made.

ANNE

That shall you know hereafter.

RICHARD

210 But shall I live in hope?

ANNE

All men I hope live so.

RICHARD

Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

ANNE

To take is not to give.

*He places the ring on her finger***RICHARD**

215 Look, how this ring encompasseth finger;
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart.
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.
And if thy poor devoted servant may
But beg one favor at thy gracious hand,
Thou dost confirm his happiness forever.

ANNE

220 What is it?

RICHARD

225 That it would please you leave these sad designs
To him that hath more cause to be a mourner,
And presently repair to Crosby House,
Where, after I have solemnly interred
At Chertsey monast'ry this noble king
And wet his grave with my repentant tears,
I will with all expedient duty see you.
For divers unknown reasons, I beseech you,
Grant me this boon.

ANNE

230 With all my heart, and much it joys me too
To see you are become so penitent.—
Tressel and Berkeley, go along with me.

RICHARD

Bid me farewell.

ANNE

235 'Tis more than you deserve;
But since you teach me how to flatter you,
Imagine I have said "farewell" already.

ANNE

I wish I knew what was in your heart.

RICHARD

The same thing that was in my words.

ANNE

I fear that both your heart and your words are false.

RICHARD

Then no man has ever been an honest man.

ANNE

Very well, then. Put up your sword.

RICHARD

Then say that you'll accept me.

ANNE

You'll know about that later.

RICHARD

But should I live in hope?

ANNE

I hope that all men live in hope.

RICHARD

Consent to wear this ring.

ANNE

To take is not to give. I'll accept it, but I won't promise anything in return.

*He places the ring on her finger.***RICHARD**

See how this ring encircles your finger. In the same way, my poor heart is enclosed inside your chest. Wear both of them, for both of them are yours. And if I, your poor devoted servant, can ask for one small favor from your gracious hand, then you'll guarantee my happiness forever.

ANNE

What is it?

RICHARD

Please leave these burial ceremonies for me to finish, as I have more reason to mourn than you do. Go immediately to my estate at Crosby House. After I have solemnly buried this noble king at Chertsey Abbey, and wet his grave with my repentant tears, I will hurry to meet you there. Please do this for me, I beg you. My reasons must remain secret for now.

ANNE

I'll do it with all my heart, and it pleases me to see how remorseful you've become.

[To gentlemen] Tressel and Berkeley, come along with me.**RICHARD**

Bid me farewell.

ANNE

To "fare well" is more than you deserve. But since you're now teaching me how to flatter you, pretend that I've said "farewell" already.

Exeunt Lady ANNE and two others

RICHARD

Sirs, take up the corse.

GENTLEMAN

Towards Chertsey, noble lord?

RICHARD

No, to Whitefriars. There attend my coming.

Exeunt all but RICHARD

240 Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won?
I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.
What, I that killed her husband and his father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
245 With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of my hatred by,
Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
And I no friends to back my suit at all
But the plain devil and dissembling looks?
250 And yet to win her, all the world to nothing! Ha!
Hath she forgot already that brave prince,
Edward, her lord, whom I some three months since
Stabbed in my angry mood at Tewkesbury?
A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
255 Framed in the prodigality of nature,
Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,
The spacious world cannot again afford.
And will she yet abase her eyes on me,
That cropped the golden prime of this sweet prince
260 And made her widow to a woeful bed?
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
On me, that halts and am misshapen thus?
My dukedom to a beggarly denier,
I do mistake my person all this while!
265 Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
Myself to be a marv'lous proper man.
I'll be at charges for a looking glass
And entertain a score or two of tailors
To study fashions to adorn my body.
270 Since I am crept in favor with myself,
I will maintain it with some little cost.
But first I'll turn yon fellow in his grave
And then return lamenting to my love.
Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,
275 That I may see my shadow as I pass.

Exit

Lady ANNE, TRESSEL, and BERKELEY exit.

RICHARD

Sirs, take up the corpse.

GENTLEMAN

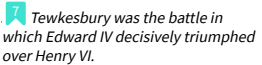
Towards Chertsey, noble lord?

RICHARD

No, towards Whitefriars Monastery. Wait for me there.

Everyone exits except for RICHARD.

Has a woman in such a mood ever been courted? Has a woman in such a mood ever been won? I'll get her, but I won't keep her long. How can it be that I—who killed her husband and his father—should win her over at the moment she hates me the most? When her mouth was full of curses, her eyes full of tears, and the bloody corpse of my victim right in front of her? She has God, her conscience, and the evidence of my deeds against me, and I have nothing to back me up but the devil and my own false looks! And yet I won her over, with all odds against me! Ha! Has she already forgotten her brave husband Prince Edward, whom I stabbed in an angry mood three months ago at the [Battle of Tewkesbury](#)? The world will never again be able to afford a man like him: such a sweet and lovely gentleman, blessed with all of nature's gifts. He was young, brave, wise, and no doubt meant to be king one day. And now she's going to cheapen herself by turning her eyes on me, who cut short her sweet prince's life and made her a widow in mourning? On me, though I'm less than half of the man that Edward was? On me, who limps along, deformed like this? I'd bet my dukedom on a beggar's penny that I've been wrong about myself all this time! Upon my life, she finds me to be a proper, handsome man—though I can't see it. I should buy a mirror and employ twenty or so tailors to study the current fashions and dress me up. Since I like myself now, it will be worth the cost. But first I'll dump this fellow into his grave and then return, weeping, to my love. Shine out, fair sun, so I can watch my shadow as I pass—until I've bought a mirror to admire my reflection.

 Tewkesbury was the battle in which Edward IV decisively triumphed over Henry VI.

He exits.

Act 1, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, Lord Marquess of DORSET, Lord RIVERS, and Lord GREY

RIVERS

Have patience, madam. There's no doubt his majesty
Will soon recover his accustomed health.

GREY

In that you brook it ill, it makes him worse.
Therefore, for God's sake, entertain good comfort
5 And cheer his grace with quick and merry eyes.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

If he were dead, what would betide on me?

Shakesclare Translation

QUEEN ELIZABETH, the Lord Marquess of DORSET, Lord RIVERS, and Lord GREY enter.

RIVERS

Have patience, madam. There's no doubt that his Majesty,
King Edward, will soon recover his health.

GREY

And if you're visibly worried, you'll make him worse. So for
God's sake, let us comfort you, and then you can cheer up
his Majesty with your lively, happy mood.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

If he were dead, what would happen to me?

RIVERS

No other harm but loss of such a lord.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The loss of such a lord includes all harms.

GREY

10 The heavens have blessed you with a goodly son
To be your comforter when he is gone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, he is young, and his minority
Is put unto the trust of Richard Gloucester,
A man that loves not me nor none of you.

RIVERS

Is it concluded that he shall be Protector?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

15 It is determined, not concluded yet;
But so it must be if the king miscarry.

Enter BUCKINGHAM and Lord STANLEY, Earl of Derby

GREY

Here comes the lord of Buckingham, and Derby.

BUCKINGHAM

[*To QUEEN ELIZABETH*] Good time of day unto your royal
Grace.

STANLEY

20 God make your Majesty joyful, as you have been.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The countess Richmond, good my lord of Derby,
To your good prayer will scarcely say amen.
Yet, Derby, notwithstanding she's your wife
And loves not me, be you, good lord, assured
25 I hate not you for her proud arrogance.

STANLEY

I do beseech you either not believe
The envious slanders of her false accusers,
Or if she be accused in true report,
Bear with her weakness, which I think proceeds
30 From wayward sickness and no grounded malice.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Saw you the king today, my lord of Derby?

STANLEY

But now the duke of Buckingham and I
Are come from visiting his majesty.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What likelihood of his amendment, lords?

BUCKINGHAM

35 Madam, good hope. His grace speaks cheerfully.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God grant him health. Did you confer with him?

RIVERS

No harm would come to you but the loss of such a husband.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The loss of such a husband includes all kinds of harm.

GREY

The heavens have blessed you with a good son, who will
comfort you when the king is gone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, but he is young, and while he's young he is still in the
care of Richard, the Duke of Gloucester--a man who loves
neither me nor any of you.

RIVERS

Has it been declared that Richard will be Protector ?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

It's been decided, but not officially declared yet. But that's
the way it must be if the king dies.

*The Duke of BUCKINGHAM enters with Lord STANLEY, Earl
of Derby.*

GREY

Here comes the lords of Buckingham, and Derby.


BUCKINGHAM

[*To QUEEN ELIZABETH*] Good day to you, your royal Grace.

STANLEY

May God make your Majesty as happy as you once were.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My good Lord Stanley, the countess Richmond would hardly
agree and say "amen" to you prayer. But even though she's
your wife and doesn't like me, you can be assured, good
lord, that I don't hate you for her proud arrogance. 

STANLEY

Please don't believe the jealous lies of her slanderers. And
even if there's some truth to the rumors, then forgive her,
for I think she only acts that way because she's sick--not
because she hates you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Did you see the king today, Lord Stanley?

STANLEY

The Duke of Buckingham and I are just coming now from a
visit to his Majesty.

QUEEN ELIZABETH


What are the chances of his recovery, lords?


BUCKINGHAM

There is good hope, madam. The king seems cheerful.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

May God grant him health. Did you speak with him?

 A "Lord Protector" acts on behalf
of a young king until he is old enough
to rule.

 Before marrying Stanley, the
Countess of Richmond was married to
Edmund Tudor. She is the mother of
Henry, Earl of Richmond, who will
confront Richard at the end of this
play. With her allegiance to the
Tudors, the countess holds no love for
the Yorks who are now in power.

BUCKINGHAM

Ay, madam. He desires to make atonement
Betwixt the duke of Gloucester and your brothers,
And betwixt them and my Lord Chamberlain,
40 And sent to warn them to his royal presence.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Would all were well—but that will never be.
I fear our happiness is at the height.

Enter RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester, and HASTINGS

RICHARD

They do me wrong, and I will not endure it!
Who is it that complains unto the king
45 That I, forsooth, am stern and love them not?
By holy Paul, they love his grace but lightly
That fill his ears with such dissentious rumors.
Because I cannot flatter and look fair,
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive and cog,
50 Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,
I must be held a rancorous enemy.
Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,
But thus his simple truth must be abused
With silken, sly, insinuating jacks?

RIVERS

55 To whom in all this presence speaks your Grace?

RICHARD

To thee, that hast nor honesty nor grace.
When have I injured thee? When done thee wrong?—
Or thee?—Or thee? Or any of your faction?
A plague upon you all! His royal grace,
60 Whom God preserve better than you would wish,
Cannot be quiet scarce a breathing while
But you must trouble him with lewd complaints.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Brother of Gloucester, you mistake the matter.
The king, on his own royal disposition,
65 And not provoked by any suitor else,
Aiming belike at your interior hatred
That in your outward actions shows itself
Against my children, brothers, and myself,
Makes him to send, that he may learn the ground
70 Of your ill will, and thereby to remove it.

RICHARD

I cannot tell. The world is grown so bad
That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.
Since every jack became a gentleman,
There's many a gentle person made a jack.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

75 Come, come, we know your meaning, brother Gloucester.
You envy my advancement, and my friends'.
God grant we never may have need of you.

RICHARD

Meantime God grants that we have need of you.
Our brother is imprisoned by your means,
80 Myself disgraced, and the nobility
Held in contempt, while great promotions
Are daily given to ennoble those
That scarce some two days since were worth a noble.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

By Him that raised me to this careful height
85 From that contented hap which I enjoyed,
I never did incense his majesty
Against the duke of Clarence, but have been
An earnest advocate to plead for him.

BUCKINGHAM

Yes, madam. He wants to reconcile Richard with your
brothers, and your brothers with Lord Hastings. He has just
summoned them all to his royal presence.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I wish that all were well—but that will never be. I fear that
our good fortune has reached its peak.

RICHARD and Lord HASTINGS enter.

RICHARD

They're abusing me, and I won't endure it! Who has been
complaining to the king that I am harsh and don't like
them? By Saint Paul, whoever is worrying the king with
these treacherous rumors doesn't love him very much. Just
because I cannot flatter and look handsome, smile in men's
faces, ingratiate myself, lie and cheat, and bow like a
pretentious Frenchman, people assume that I'm a foul
enemy. Can't a plain man live, wishing no harm on anyone,
without his words being twisted like this by slick, sly,
slithering lowlifes?

RIVERS

Which of us are you referring to, your Grace?

RICHARD

To you, who have neither honesty nor grace. When have I
injured you? When have I done you any wrong? Or you? Or
you? Or any of you and your supporters? Curse you all! The
king—whom I hope God will preserve better than you'd
like—can hardly catch his breath before you start troubling
him with your wicked complaints.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My brother-in-law of Gloucester, you're mistaken. It was the
king himself, unprovoked by anyone, who noticed your
hatred for my children, my brothers, and myself—an inner
hatred that expresses itself in your outward actions. He
summoned people to ask them about your dislike of us, so
that he might discover the reasons behind it and do
something about it.


RICHARD

I can't tell what's going on. The world has grown so bad
that little wrens now live where eagles dare not perch. Since
every peasant has become a nobleman, there are now
many noblemen who've been turned into peasants.

QUEEN ELIZABETH


Come, come, I know what you're referring to, brother-in-law
Richard. You're jealous of my friends' rise in rank, and of my
own. May God grant that I never need your help.

RICHARD

But in the meantime God grants that I need your help. My
brother, the Duke of Clarence, is imprisoned because of
your influence. I am disgraced, and the nobility are scorned,
while great promotions are handed out daily to those who
weren't worth a noble  two days ago.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I swear by the God who raised me up to this anxious height
from the contented life I used to enjoy—I never provoked
the king's anger against the Duke of Clarence. I have only
ever advocated for him and pled on his behalf. My lord, you
do me wrong to implicate me in these wicked suspicions.

 A "noble" was a small gold coin.
Richard puns on the fact that
"worthless" people are being
promoted to the nobility.

My lord, you do me shameful injury
90 Falsely to draw me in these vile suspects.

RICHARD

You may deny that you were not the mean
Of my Lord Hastings' late imprisonment.

RIVERS

She may, my lord, for—

RICHARD

95 She may, Lord Rivers. Why, who knows not so?
She may do more, sir, than denying that.
She may help you to many fair preferments
And then deny her aiding hand therein,
And lay those honors on your high desert.
What may she not? She may, ay, marry, may she—

RIVERS

100 What, marry, may she?

RICHARD

What, marry, may she? Marry with a king,
A bachelor, a handsome stripling too.
I wis, your grandam had a worsèr match.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

105 My Lord of Gloucester, I have too long borne
Your blunt upbraidings and your bitter scoffs.
By heaven, I will acquaint his majesty
With those gross taunts that oft I have endured.
I had rather be a country servant-maid
Than a great queen with this condition,
110 To be so baited, scorned, and stormèd at.

Enter old QUEEN MARGARET, apart from others

Small joy have I in being England's queen.

QUEEN MARGARET

[aside] And lessened be that small, God I beseech Him!
Thy honor, state, and seat is due to me.

RICHARD

115 *[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]* What, threat you me with telling
of the king?
Tell him, and spare not. Look, what I have said,
I will avouch 't in presence of the king;
I dare adventure to be sent to th' Tower.
'Tis time to speak. My pains are quite forgot.

QUEEN MARGARET

120 *[aside]* Out, devil! I do remember them too well:
Thou killed'st my husband Henry in the Tower,
And Edward, my poor son, at Tewkesbury.

RICHARD

125 *[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]* Ere you were queen, ay, or your
husband king,
I was a packhorse in his great affairs,
A weeder-out of his proud adversaries,
A liberal rewarder of his friends.
To royalize his blood, I spent mine own.

QUEEN MARGARET

[aside] Ay, and much better blood than his or thine.

RICHARD

Then I'm sure you'll also deny that you were the cause of
Lord Hastings' recent imprisonment

RIVERS

She may deny it, my lord, for—

RICHARD

Yes, she may, Lord Rivers. Why, everyone knows that she
may. And she may do more than just denying that, sir. She
may help you to many nice promotions and then deny that
she aided you, claiming that you won those honors through
your own merit. What may she not do? She may, yes, by
God, she may—

RIVERS

What, by God, may she do?

RICHARD

What, by God, may she do? She may marry a king, a
bachelor, a handsome young man. Certainly, your
grandmother had a worse match.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My Lord of Gloucester, for too long I've suffered your blunt
insults and your bitter scorn. By heaven, I will tell the king
about the vile taunts I've endured. I would rather be a
country servant-maid than a great queen in such a
situation—to be so taunted, scorned, and attacked.

Old QUEEN MARGARET enters, unseen.

I've had very little joy in being England's queen.

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] And may her joy be even less than that, God!
Elizabeth's honor, rank, and throne all rightly belong to me.

RICHARD

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] What, are you threatening me that
you'll tell the king? Go ahead and tell him, and don't spare
any details. Look, I will repeat what I have said here in the
presence of the king. I'll even risk being sent to the Tower
for it. It seems that all my efforts on Edward's behalf have
been forgotten.

QUEEN MARGARET


[To herself] You devil! I remember those efforts all too well:
you killed my husband Henry in the Tower, and my poor
son Edward at Tewkesbury.


RICHARD

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Yes, before you were queen, or your
husband was king, I was a beast of burden for his great
affairs. I weeded out his proud enemies and generously
rewarded his friends. I spent my own blood to make his
blood royal.

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] Yes, and in killing my husband and son, you
spent much better blood than yours or your brother's.

 In the original text, Richard uses the mild oath "marry," derived from the Virgin Mary's name.

 Queen Margaret is the widow of the Lancastrian King Henry VI, who was overthrown and killed by the Yorkists.

RICHARD

130 [to QUEEN ELIZABETH] In all which time, you and your husband Grey Were factious for the house of Lancaster.— And, Rivers, so were you.— Was not your husband In Margaret's battle at Saint Albans slain?
135 Let me put in your minds, if you forget, What you have been ere this, and what you are; Withal, what I have been, and what I am.

QUEEN MARGARET

[aside] A murd'rous villain, and so still thou art.

RICHARD

[to QUEEN ELIZABETH] Poor Clarence did forsake his father Warwick,
140 Ay, and forswore himself—which Jesu pardon!—

QUEEN MARGARET

[aside] Which God revenge!

RICHARD

To fight on Edward's party for the crown; And for his meed, poor lord, he is mew'd up.
145 I would to God my heart were flint, like Edward's, Or Edward's soft and pitiful, like mine. I am too childish-foolish for this world.

QUEEN MARGARET

[aside] Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave the world,
150 Thou cacodemon! There thy kingdom is.

RIVERS

My Lord of Gloucester, in those busy days Which here you urge to prove us enemies, We followed then our lord, our sovereign king. So should we you, if you should be our king.

RICHARD

155 If I should be? I had rather be a peddler. Far be it from my heart, the thought thereof.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

As little joy, my lord, as you suppose You should enjoy were you this country's king, As little joy may you suppose in me
160 That I enjoy, being the queen thereof.

QUEEN MARGARET

[aside] Ah, little joy enjoys the queen thereof, For I am she, and altogether joyless. I can no longer hold me patient.

She steps forward

Hear me, you wrangling pirates, that fall out
165 In sharing that which you have pill'd from me! Which of you trembles not that looks on me? If not, that I am queen, you bow like subjects, Yet that, by you deposed, you quake like rebels.— Ah, gentle villain, do not turn away.

RICHARD

170 Foul, wrinkled witch, what mak'st thou in my sight?

RICHARD

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] And during all that time, you and your first husband, Sir John Grey, were fighting for the house of Lancaster.

[To RIVERS] And, Rivers, so were you.

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Wasn't your first husband killed in Queen Margaret's battle at Saint Albans? In case you've forgotten, let me remind you who you were before, and who you are now. And remember also who I was before, and who I am now.

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] You were a murderous villain, and you still are.

RICHARD

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Poor Clarence abandoned his father-in-law Warwick, yes, and broke his own oath—may Jesus pardon him!—

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] And may God take revenge on him!

RICHARD

—to fight for Edward's side and help him win the crown. And his reward for that, the poor lord, is to be imprisoned. I wish to God that my heart was made of stone, like Edward's—or that Edward's heart was soft and emotional, like mine. I am too childlike and innocent for this world.

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] Hurry on to hell then, and leave this world, you evil spirit! Hell is where your true kingdom is.

RIVERS

My Lord of Gloucester, in those busy days, we were just following our lord, our rightful king—which you now bring up to prove that we're your enemies. And we would follow you in just the same way, if you were our king.

RICHARD

If I were king? I would rather be a peddler. Far be it for me to ever think of being king.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You would have just as little joy as you imagine if you were indeed this country's king. As the queen, I have had no joy.

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] Ah, no joy for that "queen" indeed. For I am the queen, and completely unhappy. I can no longer hold myself back.

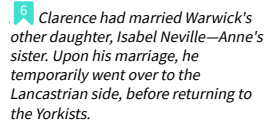
She steps forward so that everyone can see her.

Hear me, you scheming pirates, who quarrel over what you've plundered from me! Which of you doesn't tremble to look at me? If you're not trembling because I am the queen and you are my bowing subjects, then you're quivering because you're traitors who stole my throne!

[To RICHARD] Ah, you highborn villain, don't turn away.

RICHARD

You foul, wrinkled witch, what are you doing here?

 Clarence had married Warwick's other daughter, Isabel Neville—Anne's sister. Upon his marriage, he temporarily went over to the Lancastrian side, before returning to the Yorkists.

QUEEN MARGARET

But repetition of what thou hast marred.
That will I make before I let thee go.

RICHARD

Wert thou not banished on pain of death?

QUEEN MARGARET

I was, but I do find more pain in banishment
175 Than death can yield me here by my abode.
A husband and a son thou ow'st to me;
[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]
And thou a kingdom; — all of you, allegiance.
The sorrow that I have by right is yours,
180 And all the pleasures you usurp are mine.

RICHARD

The curse my noble father laid on thee
When thou didst crown his warlike brows with paper,
And with thy scorns drew'st rivers from his eyes,
And then, to dry them, gav'st the duke a clout
185 Steeped in the faultless blood of pretty Rutland—
His curses then, from bitterness of soul
Denounced against thee, are all fall'n upon thee,
And God, not we, hath plagued thy bloody deed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

So just is God to right the innocent.

HASTINGS

190 O, 'twas the foulest deed to slay that babe,
And the most merciless that e'er was heard of!

RIVERS

Tyrants themselves wept when it was reported.

DORSET

No man but prophesied revenge for it.

BUCKINGHAM

Northumberland, then present, wept to see it.

QUEEN MARGARET

195 What, were you snarling all before I came,
Ready to catch each other by the throat,
And turn you all your hatred now on me?
Did York's dread curse prevail so much with heaven
That Henry's death, my Lovelly Edward's death,
200 Their kingdom's loss, my woeful banishment,
Could all but answer for that peevish brat?
Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!
Though not by war, by surfeit die your king,
205 As ours by murder to make him a king.
[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]
Edward thy son, that now is Prince of Wales,
For Edward our son, that was Prince of Wales,
Die in his youth by like untimely violence.
210 Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
Outlive they glory, like my wretched self.
Long mayst thou live to wail they children's death
And see another, as I see thee now,
Decked in they rights, as thou art stalled in mine.
215 Long die thy happy days before they death,
And, after many lengthened hours of grief,
Die neither mother, wife, nor England's queen.
Rivers and Dorset, you were standers-by,
And so wast thou, Lord Hastings, when my son
220 Was stabbed with bloody daggers. God I pray Him
That none of you may live his natural age,

QUEEN MARGARET

Just trying to redo what you have undone. I will do that
much before I let you go.

RICHARD

Weren't you banished on pain of death?

QUEEN MARGARET

[To RICHARD] I was, but banishment is more painful to me
than dying here at home. You owe me a husband and a son.

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] And you owe me a kingdom.

[To the others] And the rest of you—in fact, all of you—owe
me your allegiance. The sorrow that I feel now rightfully
belongs to you, and all the pleasure you enjoy now
rightfully belongs to me.

RICHARD

The curse my noble father laid on you when you set a
paper crown on his head, and drew rivers of tears from his
eyes with your scorn, and then, to dry them, you gave him a
handkerchief soaked in innocent Rutland's blood—the
curses he laid on you then, when his bitter soul condemned
you, have now come to pass. God, not us, is punishing you
for your bloody deeds.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God is just, and he rewards the innocent.

HASTINGS

Oh, killing that child, Rutland, was the foulest, most
merciless deed that was ever heard of!

RIVERS

Even tyrants wept when they heard about it.

DORSET

Everyone knew that there would be revenge for it.

BUCKINGHAM


Even Northumberland, who was there, wept to see it.


QUEEN MARGARET

What, weren't you all snarling at each other before I came--
about to jump at each others' throats like dogs? And now
you're turning all your hatred on me? Did the Duke of York's
curse have so much power that Henry's death; my lovely
Edward's death; the loss of their kingdom; and my sad
banishment were all required to avenge the death of that
peevish brat Rutland? Can curses pierce the clouds and
enter heaven? Well then, open up, you dark clouds--and
hear my strong curses! Though your Yorkist king didn't die
in battle, may he die from his gluttony, just as our
Lancastrian king—my husband—was murdered to give your
king his throne.

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] May your son Edward, who is now
Prince of Wales, die violently while young, just like my son
Edward, who was once Prince of Wales. And you, Queen,
may you outlive your glory and be miserable just like I am.
Long may you live to mourn your children's death, and see
another woman take your throne and position, as I do now.
May your happiness die long before you do, and--after
many long hours of grief--may you die not as a mother, or a
wife, or even as England's queen.

[To the others] Rivers and Dorset--and you too, Lord
Hastings--you stood by when my son was stabbed with
bloody daggers. I pray to God that none of you will die a

 These events were dramatized in
Shakespeare's play *Henry VI, Part 3*.
Before having Richard's father killed,
Queen Margaret put a paper crown on
his head and gave him a handkerchief
soaked in the blood of his son
Rutland.

 The Earl of Northumberland was
an enemy of the Yorks, Richard's
family.

But by some unlooked accident cut off.

RICHARD

Have done thy charm, thou hateful, withered hag.

QUEEN MARGARET

225 And leave out thee? Stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me.
If heaven have any grievous plague in store
Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,
O, let them keep it till thy sins be ripe
And then hurl down their indignation
On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace.
230 The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul.
Thy friends suspect for traitors while thou liv'st,
And take deep traitors for thy dearest friends.
No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine,
Unless it be while some tormenting dream
235 Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils.
Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog,
Thou was sealed in thy nativity
The slave of nature and the son of hell,
Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb,
240 Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins,
Thou rag of honor, thou detested—

RICHARD

Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Richard!

RICHARD

Ha?

QUEEN MARGARET

245 I call thee not.

RICHARD

I cry thee mercy, then, for I did think
That thou hadst called me all these bitter names.

QUEEN MARGARET

Why, so I did, but looked for no reply.
O, let me make the period to my curse!

RICHARD

250 'Tis done by me, and ends in "Margaret."

QUEEN ELIZABETH

[to QUEEN MARGARET]

Thus have you breathed your curse against yourself.

QUEEN MARGARET

Poor painted queen, vain flourish of my fortune,
Why strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider,
255 Whose deadly web ensnareth thee about?
Fool, fool, thou whet'st a knife to kill thyself.
The day will come that thou shalt wish for me
To help thee curse that poisonous bunch-backed toad.

HASTINGS

260 False-boding woman, end thy frantic curse,
Lest to thy harm thou move our patience.

QUEEN MARGARET

Foul shame upon you, you have all moved mine.

RIVERS


Were you well served, you would be taught your duty.

natural death, but will be killed by some unexpected accident.

RICHARD

Enough of your witchcraft, you hateful, withered hag.

QUEEN MARGARET

And leave you out, Richard? Stay, dog, for you must hear me out. If heaven has any horrible plagues worse than anything I could imagine, oh, let it keep them until you've committed the maximum amount of sin. And then let heaven hurl down its anger on you all at once, you disturber of the poor world's peace! May the worm of guilt gnaw away at your soul constantly. May you suspect your friends of being traitors, and consider the worst traitors as your dearest friends. May you never close your wicked eyes and be able to sleep--unless it's to dream some terrifying nightmare of a hell filled with ugly devils. You cursed, prematurely born hog , wallowing in the mud; you who were born a deformed child of hell; you insult to your sad mother's womb; you hated product of your father's loins; you filthy scrap of dishonor; you disgusting—

RICHARD

Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Richard!

RICHARD

Yes?

QUEEN MARGARET

I didn't call you.

RICHARD

I beg your pardon, then--for I thought you had called me all those bitter names.

QUEEN MARGARET

Why, so I did. But I didn't want any reply from you. Oh, let me finish my curse!

RICHARD

I've already finished it. It ends in "Margaret."

QUEEN ELIZABETH

[To QUEEN MARGARET] See, you've only cursed yourself.

QUEEN MARGARET

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] You poor imitation of a queen, you meaningless decoration on my throne: why do you give sugar to this swollen spider when he's already ensnared you in his deadly web? Fool, fool, you're sharpening the knife that will kill you. The day will come when you'll wish that I could help you curse this poisonous, hunchbacked toad.

HASTINGS


You false prophet, stop your frantic curses before we lose our patience and cause you harm.

QUEEN MARGARET

Foul shame on you—I've already lost my patience with you all.

RIVERS

If you got what you deserved, you would be taught to show some respect.

 Here, Queen Margaret uses Richard's heraldic emblem—a boar—to insult him.

QUEEN MARGARET

To serve me well, you all should do me duty:
Teach me to be your queen, and you my subjects.
265 O, serve me well, and teach yourselves that duty!

DORSET

[*to RIVERS*] Dispute not with her; she is lunatic.

QUEEN MARGARET

Peace, Master Marquess, you are malapert.
Your fire-new stamp of honor is scarce current.
O, that your young nobility could judge
270 What 'twere to lose it and be miserable!
They that stand high have many blasts to shake them,
And if they fall, they dash themselves to pieces.

RICHARD

Good counsel, marry. —Learn it, learn it, marquess.

DORSET

It touches you, my lord, as much as me.

RICHARD

275 Ay, and much more; but I was born so high.
Our aerie buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind and scorns the sun.

QUEEN MARGARET

And turns the sun to shade. Alas, alas,
Witness my son, now in the shade of death,
280 Whose bright out-shining beams thy cloudy wrath
Hath in eternal darkness folded up.
Your aerie buildeth in our aerie's nest.
O God, that seest it, do not suffer it!
As it was won with blood, lost be it so.

BUCKINGHAM

285 Peace, peace, for shame, if not for charity.

QUEEN MARGARET

Urge neither charity nor shame to me.
[*addressing the others*]
Uncharitably with me have you dealt,
And shamefully my hopes by you are butchered.
290 My charity is outrage, life my shame,
And in that shame still live my sorrows' rage.

BUCKINGHAM

Have done, have done.

QUEEN MARGARET

O princely Buckingham, I'll kiss thy hand
In sign of league and amity with thee.
295 Now fair befall thee and thy noble house!
Thy garments are not spotted with our blood,
Nor thou within the compass of my curse.

BUCKINGHAM

Nor no one here, for curses never pass
The lips of those that breathe them in the air.

QUEEN MARGARET

300 I will not think but they ascend the sky,
And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace.
[*aside to BUCKINGHAM*]
O Buckingham, take heed of yonder dog!
Look when he fawns, he bites; and when he bites,
305 His venom tooth will rankle to the death.

QUEEN MARGARET

If I got what I deserved, you would all be showing *me*
respect—I would be your queen, and you would be my
subjects. Oh, give me what I deserve, then—and teach
yourselves some respect!

DORSET

[*To RIVERS*] Don't try to argue with her. She's a lunatic.

QUEEN MARGARET

[*To DORSET*] Quiet, Master Marquess, you're being
impudent. Your noble title is so newly-minted that its not
even legal yet. Oh, that your recent nobility could
understand what it means to be lost and miserable! Those
who are very high up must be shaken by many blasts of
wind. And when they fall, they dash themselves to pieces.

RICHARD

[*To QUEEN MARGARET*] Good advice, by God.

[*To DORSET*] Listen and learn, Marquess.

DORSET

It applies to you as much as to me, my lord.

RICHARD

Yes, and even more so. But I was born at that high social
rank. My family lives like eagles at the top of the tallest
cedar tree, playing in the wind and looking fearlessly at the
sun.

QUEEN MARGARET

And turning the sun into shadow. Alas, alas, like *my* son,
who is now in the shadow of death. Your cloudy anger has
swallowed up his bright-shining beams, and now he dwells
in eternal darkness. You're building your nest in *our* nest.
Oh God, witness this injustice and don't let it go
unpunished! As the Yorks won the crown through
bloodshed, let them also lose it in the same way.

BUCKINGHAM

Quiet, quiet—have some shame at least, if you can't be
kind.

QUEEN MARGARET

Don't preach about kindness or shame to me.

[*To the others*] You have been unkind to me, and have
shamefully butchered my hopes. My kindness to you is to
be outraged, and my life is my shame—a shame that
contains all my sadness and rage.

BUCKINGHAM

Enough, enough.

QUEEN MARGARET

Oh, princely Buckingham, I'll kiss your hand as a sign of my
support and friendship. May only good things come to you
and your noble family! Your clothes are not stained with my
family's blood, and so you don't fall under my curse.

BUCKINGHAM

No one here is under your curse either. For curses are just
empty words, lost to the air as soon as they're spoken.

QUEEN MARGARET

No, I believe that they rise up to heaven and awaken God
from his gentle, peaceful sleep.
[*To BUCKINGHAM so that only he can hear*] Oh,
Buckingham, watch out for that dog Richard there! When
he flatters, he bites, and when he bites, his poisonous teeth

Have naught to do with him. Beware of him.
Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him,
And all their ministers attend on him.

RICHARD

What doth she say, my lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

310 Nothing that I respect, my gracious lord.

QUEEN MARGARET

What, dost thou scorn me for my gentle counsel,
And soothe the devil that I warn thee from?
O, but remember this another day,
When he shall split thy very heart with sorrow,
315 And say poor Margaret was a prophetess.—
Live each of you the subjects to his hate,
And he to yours, and all of you to God's.

Exit

HASTINGS

My hair doth stand an end to hear her curses.

RIVERS

And so doth mine. I muse why she's at liberty.

RICHARD

320 I cannot blame her. By God's holy mother,
She hath had too much wrong, and I repent
My part thereof that I have done to her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I never did her any, to my knowledge.

RICHARD

Yet you have all the vantage of her wrong.
325 I was too hot to do somebody good
That is too cold in thinking of it now.
Marry, as for Clarence, he is well repaid;
He is franked up to fattening for his pains.
God pardon them that are the cause thereof.

RIVERS

330 A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion
To pray for them that have done scathe to us.

RICHARD

So do I ever [*aside*] being well-advised,
For had I cursed now, I had cursed myself.

Enter CATESBY

CATESBY

Madam, his majesty doth call for you,—
335 And for your Grace,—and yours, my gracious lords.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Catesby, I come. —Lords, will you go with me?

RIVERS

We wait upon your Grace.

Exeunt all but RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester

RICHARD

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
The secret mischiefs that I set abroad

340

are deadly. Have nothing to do with him. Beware of him.
Sin, death, and hell have claimed him as their own, and
their devils are his servants.

RICHARD

What does she say, my lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

Nothing that I respect, my gracious lord.

QUEEN MARGARET

What, will you scorn me for my friendly advice, and comfort
the devil that I'm warning you about? Oh, you will
remember this, when one day he splits your heart in two
with sorrow. Then you'll say that poor Margaret was a
prophet. May Richard come to hate everyone here, and may
you come to hate him, and may God hate you all!

She exits.

HASTINGS

My hair stands on end when I hear her curses.

RIVERS

So does mine. I wonder why she's not in prison.

RICHARD

I cannot blame her. By God's holy mother, she has suffered
too much. And I'm sorry for the part I've played in her
troubles.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I never did her any wrong, to my knowledge.

RICHARD

But you've reaped all the benefits from her suffering. I was
too eager in helping Edward to the throne, and now he
seems to have forgotten my deeds. Well, as for Clarence, he
is being well repaid for his pains—shut in a pigsty to be
fattened up and slaughtered. May God pardon those
responsible.

RIVERS

That's very virtuous and Christian of you to pray for those
who have harmed us.

RICHARD

I always do.

[To himself] For I am the one responsible for this harm, and
if I had cursed them, I would only be cursing myself.

CATESBY enters.

CATESBY

Madam, his Majesty asks for you—and for you, Duke of
Gloucester—and for you, my gracious lords.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I will go now, Catesby.

[To the others] Lords, will you go with me?

RIVERS

We will attend you, your Grace.

Everyone exits except for RICHARD.

RICHARD

I commit the crimes, and I start the quarrels. I do wicked
things in secret, and then lay the blame on others. I weep

I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
 Clarence, whom I indeed have cast in darkness,
 I do beweepe to many simple gulls,
 Namely, to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham,
 And tell them 'tis the queen and her allies
 345 That stir the king against the duke my brother.
 Now they believe it and withal whet me
 To be revenged on Rivers, Dorset, Grey;
 But then I sigh and, with a piece of scripture,
 Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
 350 And thus I clothe my naked villainy
 With odd old ends stolen out of Holy Writ,
 And seem a saint when most I play the devil.

Enter two MURDERERS

But, soft! here come my executioners.—
 How now, my hardy, stout, resolvèd mates?
 355 Are you now going to dispatch this thing?

FIRST MURDERER

We are, my lord, and come to have the warrant
 That we may be admitted where he is.

RICHARD

Well thought upon. I have it here about me.
[He gives a paper]
 360 When you have done, repair to Crosby Place.
 But, sirs, be sudden in the execution,
 Withal obdurate; do not hear him plead,
 For Clarence is well-spoken and perhaps
 May move your hearts to pity if you mark him.

FIRST MURDERER

365 Tut, tut, my lord, we will not stand to prate.
 Talkers are no good doers. Be assured
 We go to use our hands and not our tongues.

RICHARD

Your eyes drop millstones, when fools' eyes drop tears.
 I like you lads. About your business straight.
 370 Go, go, dispatch.

MURDERERS

We will, my noble lord.

Exeunt

about Clarence, whom I've had thrown into prison, in front
 of these gullible fools—namely, Derby, Hastings, and
 Buckingham. And I tell them that it's the queen and her
 allies who have incited the King against Clarence. Now they
 believe it, and they urge me to take revenge on Rivers,
 Dorset, and Grey...but then I sigh, and quote a piece of
 scripture to them, saying that God tells us to repay evil with
 good. And so I clothe my naked villainy with odds and ends
 stolen from the Holy Bible, and I seem like a saint exactly
 when I act most like the devil.

Two MURDERERS enter.

But quiet! Here come the executioners I've hired.

[To the MURDERERS] How's it going, my hardy, strong,
 reliable friends? Are you going now to take care of this
 business?

FIRST MURDERER

We are, my lord. We've come to get the warrant so we can
 be admitted into Clarence's cell.

RICHARD

Good thinking. I have it on me here.

[He gives them a paper] When you're done, go to Crosby
 Place. But, sirs, be quick in your execution. And don't let
 him plead for his life, for Clarence is well-spoken, and he
 may convince you to spare him if you listen too closely to
 his words.

FIRST MURDERER

Tut, tut, my lord, we won't stand around and chat. Talkers
 are not good doers. Rest assured that we go to use our
 hands, not our tongues.

RICHARD

You remain stone-faced when fools' eyes drop tears. I like
 you lads. Go about your business right away. Go, go, get to
 it.

MURDERERS

We will, my noble lord.

They all exit.

Act 1, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter CLARENCE and BRAKENBURY

BRAKENBURY

Why looks your grace so heavily today?

CLARENCE

O, I have passed a miserable night,
 So full of ugly dreams, of ugly sights,
 That, as I am a Christian faithful man,
 5 I would not spend another such a night
 Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days,
 So full of dismal terror was the time.

BRAKENBURY

What was your dream, my lord? I pray you tell me.

Shakescleare Translation

CLARENCE and his jailer BRAKENBURY enter.

BRAKENBURY

Why do you look so sad today, your Grace?

CLARENCE

Oh, I had a miserable night last night. It was so full of ugly
 dreams and terrifying visions that I swear I wouldn't choose
 to spend another night like it—even if it bought me a
 lifetime of happy days.

BRAKENBURY

What was your dream, my lord? Please tell me.

CLARENCE

Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower
 10 And was embarked to cross to Burgundy,
 And in my company my brother Gloucester,
 Who from my cabin tempted me to walk
 Upon the hatches. Thence we looked toward England
 And cited up a thousand fearful times,
 15 During the wars of York and Lancaster
 That had befall'n us. As we paced along
 Upon the giddy footing of the hatches,
 Methought that Gloucester stumbled, and in falling
 Struck me, that thought to stay him, overboard
 20 Into the tumbling billows of the main.
 O Lord, methought what pain it was to drown,
 What dreadful noise of waters in my ears,
 What sights of ugly death within my eyes.
 Methoughts I saw a thousand fearful wracks,
 25 Ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon,
 Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
 Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
 All scattered in the bottom of the sea.
 Some lay in dead men's skulls, and in the holes
 30 Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept—
 as 'twere in scorn of eyes— reflecting gems,
 That wooed the slimy bottom of the deep
 And mocked the dead bones that lay scattered by.

BRAKENBURY

Had you such leisure in the time of death
 35 To gaze upon the secrets of the deep?

CLARENCE

Methought I had, and often did I strive
 To yield the ghost, but still the envious flood
 Stopped in my soul and would not let it forth
 To find the empty, vast, and wand'ring air,
 40 But smothered it within my panting bulk,
 Who almost burst to belch it in the sea.

BRAKENBURY

Awaked you not in this sore agony?

CLARENCE

No, no, my dream was lengthened after life.
 O, then began the tempest to my soul.
 45 I passed, methought, the melancholy flood,
 With that sour ferryman which poets write of,
 Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
 The first that there did greet my stranger-soul
 Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,
 50 Who cried aloud, "What scourge for perjury
 Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?"
 And so he vanished. Then came wand'ring by
 A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
 Dabbled in blood, and he shrieked out aloud
 55 "Clarence is come—false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
 That stabbed me in the field by Tewkesbury.
 Seize on him, furies. Take him unto torment."
 With that, methoughts, a legion of foul fiends
 Environed me and howled in mine ears
 60 Such hideous cries that with the very noise
 I trembling waked, and for a season after
 Could not believe but that I was in hell,
 Such terrible impression made my dream.

BRAKENBURY

No marvel, lord, though it affrighted you.
 65 I am afraid, methinks, to hear you tell it.

CLARENCE

Ah keeper, keeper, I have done those things,
 That now give evidence against my soul,
 For Edward's sake, and see how he requites me.—
 O God, if my deep prayers cannot appease thee,
 70

CLARENCE

I dreamed that I had broken out of the Tower and was on a
 ship to France, and my brother Richard was with me. He
 persuaded me to leave my cabin and walk on the boat's
 deck with him. From there we looked toward England and
 reminisced about our many frightening experiences during
 the wars between the Yorks and the Lancasters. As we
 paced along the boards of the deck, Richard seemed to
 stumble, and as I tried to grab him he knocked me
 overboard into the rolling waves. Oh Lord, how painful it
 was to drown—with the dreadful noise of water in my ears
 and the ugly visions of death in my eyes. I seemed to see a
 thousand shipwrecks; ten thousand men whose bodies had
 been gnawed by fish; bars of gold; huge anchors; heaps of
 pearls; and vast amounts of priceless jewels, all scattered
 on the bottom of the sea. Some of the jewels lay inside of
 dead men's skulls. And they had crept into their empty eye
 sockets—so that they looked like false eyes. The gems
 reflected the slimy bottom of the ocean floor, and mocked
 the dead bones that lay scattered around.

BRAKENBURY

Did you really have so much time to examine the secrets of
 the deep while you were dying?

CLARENCE

It seemed like I did. And I often tried to die, but the jealous
 waves kept my soul bottled up inside of me, and wouldn't
 let it go free to find the empty, wandering air. The water
 kept my soul smothered inside my panting body until I
 almost burst open.

BRAKENBURY

Didn't you wake up during all this agony?

CLARENCE


No, no, my dream continued after I died. Oh, then the real
 storm of my soul began! I passed over the river of death
 with the help of Charon, the ferryman of the underworld,
 and I entered the kingdom of perpetual night. The first soul
 to greet me there was my great father-in-law, the Earl of
 Warwick, who cried aloud, "What terrible punishment for
 oath-breaking can this dark kingdom inflict on that false
 Clarence?" And then he vanished. Next a shadow like an
 angel came wandering by, with its bright hair spattered
 with blood, and it shrieked aloud, "Clarence is here—false,
 fickle, lying Clarence, who stabbed me in the field at
 Tewkesbury. Seize him, avenging devils. Take him and
 torture him." With that it seemed like a legion of foul
 demons surrounded me and howled in my ears, and their
 cries were so loud and horrible that I woke up trembling.
 And for a long time afterward I still believed that I was in
 hell—that was how terrible an impression this dream made
 on me.

BRAKENBURY

It's no surprise that it frightened you, my lord. I'm afraid
 just hearing you tell it.

CLARENCE

[To BRAKENBURY] Ah, jailer, jailer, I did all those things that
 the ghosts accused me of—and my crimes are now giving
 evidence against my soul. I did them all for King Edward's
 sake, and now see how he thanks me.

 This ghost is Edward, Prince of
 Wales—Henry VI and Margaret's son.
 Clarence helped Richard kill him.

But thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds,
 Yet execute thy wrath in me alone!
 O, spare my guiltless wife and my poor children!—
 Keeper, I prithee sit by me awhile.
 My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep.

BRAKENBURY

75 I will, my lord. God give your Grace good rest.

CLARENCE sleeps

BRAKENBURY

Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
 Makes the night morning, and the noontide night.
 Princes have but their titles for their glories,
 An outward honor for an inward toil,
 80 And, for unfelt imaginations,
 They often feel a world of restless cares,
 So that betwixt their titles and low name
 There's nothing differs but the outward fame.

Enter the two MURDERERS

FIRST MURDERER

Ho, who's here?

BRAKENBURY

85 What wouldst thou, fellow? And how cam'st thou hither?

SECOND MURDERER

I would speak with Clarence, and I came hither on my legs.

BRAKENBURY

What, so brief?

FIRST MURDERER

'Tis better, sir, to be brief than tedious.—Let him see
 90 our commission, and talk no more.

BRAKENBURY reads the paper

BRAKENBURY

I am in this commanded to deliver
 The noble duke of Clarence to your hands.
 I will not reason what is meant hereby
 Because I will be guiltless from the meaning.
 95 There lies the duke asleep, and there the keys.
[He hands them the keys]
 I'll to the king and signify to him
 That thus I have resigned my charge to you.

FIRST MURDERER

You may, sir. 'Tis a point of wisdom. Fare you well.

Exit BRAKENBURY

SECOND MURDERER

100 What, shall I stab him as he sleeps?

FIRST MURDERER

No. He'll say 'twas done cowardly, when he wakes.

SECOND MURDERER

Why, he shall never wake until the great Judgment Day.

[To himself] Oh God, if you aren't satisfied with my
 repentant prayers--and you must avenge my crimes--then
 punish me alone! Oh, spare my innocent wife and my poor
 children!

[To BRAKENBURY] Jailer, please sit with me a while. My soul
 is sad, and I want to sleep.

BRAKENBURY

I will, my lord. May God give you good rest.

CLARENCE falls asleep.

BRAKENBURY

Sorrow breaks natural rhythms and interrupts sleep,
 making night into morning and noon into night. The only
 glory princes really have are their titles, which are outward
 honors for their inner troubles. They experience a world of
 worry about imaginary things, so that the only real
 difference between princes and peasants is the princes'
 outward fame.

The two MURDERERS enter.

FIRST MURDERER

Hey, who's there?

BRAKENBURY

What do you want, man? And how did you get here?

SECOND MURDERER

I want to speak with Clarence, and I came here on my legs.

BRAKENBURY

What, do you dare to be so blunt with me?

FIRST MURDERER

It's better to be blunt than to be long-winded, sir.

[To the SECOND MURDERER] Let him see our warrant, and
 don't say anything.

*The SECOND MURDERER hands BRAKENBURY the paper.
 BRAKENBURY reads it.*

BRAKENBURY

This warrant commands me to deliver the noble Duke of
 Clarence into your hands. I won't ask what this means, for
 I'd rather not know about something that might make me
 guilty later. There's the duke, sleeping, and here are the
 keys.

[He hands them the keys] I'll go to the king and tell him that
 I've handed over my prisoner to you.

FIRST MURDERER

You may do that, sir. It's a wise idea. Farewell.

BRAKENBURY exits.

SECOND MURDERER

Well, should I stab him as he sleeps?

FIRST MURDERER

No. When he wakes up he'll say that we killed him like
 cowards.

SECOND MURDERER

Why, he won't be waking up until Judgment Day.

FIRST MURDERER

Why, then he'll say we stabbed him sleeping.

SECOND MURDERER

105 The urging of that word "judgment" hath bred a kind of remorse in me.

FIRST MURDERER

What, art thou afraid?

SECOND MURDERER

Not to kill him, having a warrant, but to be damned for killing him, from the which no warrant can defend me.

FIRST MURDERER

110 I thought thou hadst been resolute.

SECOND MURDERER

So I am—to let him live.

FIRST MURDERER

I'll back to the duke of Gloucester and tell him so.

SECOND MURDERER

115 Nay, I prithe thee stay a little. I hope this passionate humor of mine will change. It was wont to hold me but while one tells twenty.

FIRST MURDERER

How dost thou feel thyself now?

SECOND MURDERER

Faith, some certain dregs of conscience are yet within me.

FIRST MURDERER

Remember our reward when the deed's done.

SECOND MURDERER

120 Zounds, he dies! I had forgot the reward.

FIRST MURDERER

Where's thy conscience now?

SECOND MURDERER

O, in the duke of Gloucester's purse.

FIRST MURDERER

So when he opens his purse to give us our reward, thy conscience flies out.

SECOND MURDERER

125 'Tis no matter. Let it go. There's few or none will entertain it.

FIRST MURDERER

What if it come to thee again?

SECOND MURDERER

130 I'll not meddle with it. It makes a man a coward: a man cannot steal but it accuseth him; a man cannot swear but it checks him; a man cannot lie with his neighbor's wife but it detects him. 'Tis a blushing, shamefaced spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom. It fills a man full of obstacles. It made me once restore a purse of gold that by chance I found. It beggars any man that keeps it. It is turned out of towns and cities for a

135

FIRST MURDERER

Well, then on Judgment Day he'll say that we stabbed him in his sleep.

SECOND MURDERER

That word "judgment" has made me feel a little bit guilty.

FIRST MURDERER

What, are you afraid?

SECOND MURDERER

Not afraid to kill him, since we have a warrant for it. But I'm afraid to be damned for killing him. No warrant can protect me from that.

FIRST MURDERER

I thought you were sure about this.

SECOND MURDERER

I am sure—that we should let him live.

FIRST MURDERER

I'll go back to the Duke of Gloucester and tell him so.

SECOND MURDERER

No, please, stay a minute. I'm hoping that my compassionate mood will pass. It usually only lasts about twenty seconds.

FIRST MURDERER

How are you feeling now?


SECOND MURDERER

Honestly, my conscience is still troubling me a bit.

FIRST MURDERER

Remember the reward we'll get when the deed is done.

SECOND MURDERER

By God , he must die! I had forgotten about the reward.

FIRST MURDERER

Where's your conscience now?

SECOND MURDERER

Oh, in the Duke of Gloucester's purse.

FIRST MURDERER

So when he opens his purse to give us our reward, your conscience will fly out.

SECOND MURDERER


That won't matter. Let it fly off. No one will take it in.

FIRST MURDERER

What if it comes back to you?

SECOND MURDERER

I won't bother with it. A conscience makes a man a coward. A man can't steal without it accusing him; he can't swear without it restraining him; he can't sleep with his neighbor's wife without it exposing him. It's a blushing, shamefaced spirit that betrays a man's heart. It fills him with obstacles. It once made me return a purse full of gold that I found. A conscience can turn any man into a beggar. It's been thrown out of towns and cities like a dangerous enemy. Any

 In the original text, the Second Murderer uses the strong Elizabethan oath "Zounds," which literally means "God's wounds."

dangerous thing, and every man that means to live well endeavors to trust to himself and live without it.

FIRST MURDERER

Zounds, 'tis even now at my elbow, persuading me not to kill the duke.

SECOND MURDERER

140 Take the devil in thy mind, and believe him not. He would insinuate with thee but to make thee sigh.

FIRST MURDERER

I am strong-framed. He cannot prevail with me.

SECOND MURDERER

Spoke like a tall man that respects thy reputation. Come, shall we fall to work?

FIRST MURDERER

145 Take him on the costard with the hilts of thy sword, and then throw him into the malmsey butt in the next room.

SECOND MURDERER

O excellent device—and make a sop of him.

FIRST MURDERER

Soft, he wakes.

SECOND MURDERER

150 Strike!

FIRST MURDERER

No, we'll reason with him.

CLARENCE wakes

CLARENCE

Where art thou, keeper? Give me a cup of wine.

SECOND MURDERER

You shall have wine enough, my lord, anon.

CLARENCE

In God's name, what art thou?

FIRST MURDERER

155 A man, as you are.

CLARENCE

But not, as I am, royal.

FIRST MURDERER

Nor you, as we are, loyal.

CLARENCE

Thy voice is thunder, but thy looks are humble.

FIRST MURDERER

My voice is now the king's, my looks mine own.

CLARENCE

160 How darkly and how deadly dost thou speak! Your eyes do menace me. Why look you pale? Who sent you hither? Wherefore do you come?

SECOND MURDERER

To, to, to—

man who wants to live well should trust only himself, and live without his conscience.

FIRST MURDERER

My God, now it's even at my elbow, persuading me not to kill the duke.

SECOND MURDERER

Ignore your conscience, and think about the devil instead. He might flatter you, but he won't make you sad.

FIRST MURDERER

I'm strong-willed. My conscience won't overcome me.

SECOND MURDERER

Spoken like a brave man who values his reputation. Come, shall we get to work?

FIRST MURDERER

Hit him on the head with the hilt of your sword, and then throw him in the wine barrel in the next room.

SECOND MURDERER

Oh, what an excellent plan—we'll make him a sponge for the wine.

FIRST MURDERER

Quiet, he's waking up.

SECOND MURDERER

Strike!

FIRST MURDERER

No, we'll talk to him first.

CLARENCE wakes up.

CLARENCE

Where are you, jailer? Give me a cup of wine.

SECOND MURDERER

You'll have plenty of wine soon enough, my lord.

CLARENCE

In God's name, who are you?

FIRST MURDERER

A man, like you are.

CLARENCE

But not a royal man, as I am.

FIRST MURDERER

And you're not a *loyal* man, as we are.

CLARENCE

You speak with authority, but you look like a common man.

FIRST MURDERER

I'm speaking for the king—my looks are my own.

CLARENCE

Your words are so dark and threatening! Your eyes menace me. Why do you look so pale? Who sent you here? Why have you come?

SECOND MURDERER

To, to, to—

CLARENCE

To murder me?

BOTH MURDERERS

165 Ay, ay.

CLARENCE

You scarcely have the hearts to tell me so,
And therefore cannot have the hearts to do it.
Wherein, my friends, have I offended you?

FIRST MURDERER

Offended us you have not, but the king.

CLARENCE

170 I shall be reconciled to him again.

SECOND MURDERER

Never, my lord. Therefore prepare to die.

CLARENCE

Are you drawn forth among a world of men
To slay the innocent? What is my offense?
Where is the evidence that doth accuse me?
175 What lawful quest have given their verdict up
Unto the frowning judge? Or who pronounced
The bitter sentence of poor Clarence' death
Before I be convict by course of law?
To threaten me with death is most unlawful.
180 I charge you, as you hope to have redemption,
By Christ's dear blood shed for our grievous sins,
That you depart, and lay no hands on me.
The deed you undertake is damnable.

FIRST MURDERER

What we will do, we do upon command.

SECOND MURDERER

185 And he that hath commanded is our king.

CLARENCE

Erroneous vassals, the great King of kings
Hath in the tables of His law commanded
That thou shalt do no murder. Will thou then
Spurn at His edict and fulfill a man's?
190 Take heed, for He holds vengeance in His hand
To hurl upon their heads that break His law.

SECOND MURDERER

And that same vengeance doth He hurl on thee
For false forswearing and for murder too.
Thou didst receive the sacrament to fight
195 In quarrel of the house of Lancaster.

FIRST MURDERER

And, like a traitor to the name of God,
Didst break that vow, and with thy treacherous blade
Unrippedst the bowels of thy sovereign's son.

SECOND MURDERER

Whom thou wert sworn to cherish and defend.

FIRST MURDERER

200 How canst thou urge God's dreadful law to us
When thou hast broke it in such dear degree?

CLARENCE

Alas! For whose sake did I that ill deed?
For Edward, for my brother, for his sake.
He sends you not to murder me for this,
205 For in that sin he is as deep as I.
If God will be avenged for this deed,

CLARENCE

To murder me?

BOTH MURDERERS

Yes, yes.

CLARENCE

You hardly have the heart to tell me, so you must not have
the heart to do it. Besides, my friends, have I offended you?

FIRST MURDERER

You haven't offended us—you offended the king.

CLARENCE

He and I will be reconciled again.

SECOND MURDERER

Never, my lord. So prepare to die.

CLARENCE

Have you been chosen specially, just to kill the innocent?
What is my offense? Where is the evidence against me?
What jury has sentenced me in front of a frowning judge? Or
who has pronounced this death sentence on me before I
could be convicted by a court of law? To threaten me with
death is wrong. If you hope to be saved by Christ's dear
blood--which was shed for our sins--then I tell you to leave
now without touching me. The deed you plan to do is
punishable with damnation.

FIRST MURDERER

What we do, we do because we were commanded to.

SECOND MURDERER

And the one who has commanded us is our king.

CLARENCE

You misguided subjects, the great King of Kings—God—has
said in his Ten Commandments that "you shall not murder."
Will you then disobey God's commandment just to obey a
man's? Beware, for God holds vengeance in his hand,
waiting to smite those who break his laws.

SECOND MURDERER

And he will smite you with that same vengeance for
breaking your oaths, and for murder too. You swore a holy
oath to fight for the house of Lancaster.

FIRST MURDERER

And--like a traitor to the name of God--you broke that vow,
and with your treacherous sword you ripped open the chest
of your king, Henry's, son Edward.

SECOND MURDERER

Whom you were sworn to cherish and defend.

FIRST MURDERER

How can you preach about God's laws to us when you have
broken them to such an extreme degree?

CLARENCE

Alas! But for whose sake did I do that terrible deed? For my
brother Edward, for his sake. He can't be sending you to
murder me for the prince's death--because in that, he is just
as guilty as I am. If God intends to punish me for this deed,
oh, you know that he will do it publicly! God has no need for

O, know you yet He doth it publicly!
Take not the quarrel from His powerful arm;
He needs no indirect or lawless course
210 To cut off those that have offended Him.

FIRST MURDERER

Who made thee then a bloody minister
When gallant-springing, brave Plantagenet,
That princely novice, was struck dead by thee?

CLARENCE

My brother's love, the devil, and my rage.

FIRST MURDERER

215 Thy brother's love, our duty, and thy faults
Provoke us hither now to slaughter thee.

CLARENCE

If you do love my brother, hate not me.
I am his brother, and I love him well.
If you are hired for meed, go back again,
220 And I will send you to my brother Gloucester,
Who shall reward you better for my life
Than Edward will for tidings of my death.

SECOND MURDERER

You are deceived. Your brother Gloucester hates you.

CLARENCE

225 O, no, he loves me, and he holds me dear.
Go you to him from me.

FIRST MURDERER

Ay, so we will.

CLARENCE

Tell him, when that our princely father York
Blessed his three sons with his victorious arm,
And charged us from his soul to love each other,
230 He little thought of this divided friendship.
Bid Gloucester think of this, and he will weep.

FIRST MURDERER

Ay, millstones, as he lessoned us to weep.

CLARENCE

O, do not slander him, for he is kind.

FIRST MURDERER

235 As snow in harvest. Come, you deceive yourself.
'Tis he that sends us to destroy you here.

CLARENCE

It cannot be, for he bewept my fortune,
And hugged me in his arms, and swore with sobs
That he would labor my delivery.

SECOND MURDERER

240 Why, so he doth, when he delivers you
From this earth's thralldom to the joys of heaven.

FIRST MURDERER

Make peace with God, for you must die, my lord.

CLARENCE

245 Have you that holy feeling in your souls
To counsel me to make my peace with God,
And art you yet to your own souls so blind
That thou wilt war with God by murd'ring me?
O sirs, consider: they that set you on
To do this deed will hate you for the deed.

indirect or illegal methods of killing those who have
offended him.

FIRST MURDERER

Who provoked you to kill that brave and lively youth, Prince
Edward?

CLARENCE

My brother's love; the devil; and my rage.

FIRST MURDERER

Well, your brother's love; our duty; and your own crimes
now provoke us to kill *you*.

CLARENCE

If you really love my brother Richard, then don't hate me. I
am his brother, and I love him very much. If you're hired to
do this for money, then go back again and talk to my
brother the Duke of Gloucester. He will reward you better
for sparing my life than King Edward will for news of my
death.

SECOND MURDERER

You are deceived. Your brother Richard hates you.

CLARENCE

Oh, no, he loves me and cherishes me. Go to him from me.

FIRST MURDERER

Yes, so we will.

CLARENCE

Tell him that when our princely father, the Duke of York,
blessed his three sons and commanded us to love each
other, he never imagined that our friendship would end up
divided like this. Remind Richard of this, and he will weep.

FIRST MURDERER

Yes, he'll weep stones, as he taught us to do.

CLARENCE

Oh, do not slander him, for he is a kind man.

FIRST MURDERER

As kind as snow during harvest time. Come, you're
deceiving yourself. It's Richard who sent us here to kill you.

CLARENCE

It cannot be. He wept over my imprisonment. And he
hugged me in his arms, and swore while sobbing that he
would work to have me released.

SECOND MURDERER

Why, that's what he did—and now you'll be released from
the prison of earth, to be free among the joys of heaven.

FIRST MURDERER

Make your peace with God, for you must die, my lord.

CLARENCE

You have enough holy feeling in your souls to advise me to
make my peace with God. But you're still willing to disobey
God by murdering me? Oh, sirs, consider this: those who
sent you to do this deed will hate you for doing it.

SECOND MURDERER

[to FIRST MURDERER] What shall we do?

CLARENCE

Relent, and save your souls.

250 Which of you—if you were a prince's son
Being pent from liberty, as I am now—
If two such murderers as yourselves came to you,
Would you not entreat for life? Ay, you would beg,
Were you in my distress.

FIRST MURDERER

255 Relent? No. 'Tis cowardly and womanish.

CLARENCE

Not to relent is beastly, savage, devilish.

[to SECOND MURDERER]

My friend, I spy some pity in thy looks.

O, if thine eye be not a flatterer,

260 Come thou on my side and entreat for me.
A begging prince what beggar pities not?

SECOND MURDERER

Look behind you, my lord.

FIRST MURDERER

Take that, and that. [stabs CLARENCE]

If all this will not do,

265 I'll drown you in the malmsey butt within.

Exit with the body

SECOND MURDERER

A bloody deed, and desperately dispatched.

How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands

Of this most grievous murder.

Enter FIRST MURDERER

FIRST MURDERER

How now? What mean'st thou, that thou help'st me not?

270 By heavens, the duke shall know how slack you have
been.

SECOND MURDERER

I would he knew that I had saved his brother.

Take thou the fee, and tell him what I say,

For I repent me that the duke is slain.

Exit

FIRST MURDERER

275 So do not I. Go, coward as thou art.

Well, I'll go hide the body in some hole

Till that the duke give order for his burial.

And when I have my meed, I will away,

For this will out, and then I must not stay.

Exit


SECOND MURDERER


[To the FIRST MURDERER] What should we do?

CLARENCE

Give up this attempt, and save your souls. Which of you, if you were in my position—a prince's son in prison, and two murderers like yourselves came to you—wouldn't beg for your life? Yes, you would beg, if you were in my situation.

FIRST MURDERER

Give up? No. That's cowardly and womanish .

 According to the gender conventions of Shakespeare's day, men were thought to be braver than women.

CLARENCE

But to *not* give up, and murder me, is beastly, savage, and devilish.

[To the SECOND MURDERER] My friend, I can see some pity in your face. Oh, if I'm right, then take my side and argue for my life. What beggar wouldn't pity a begging prince?

SECOND MURDERER


Look behind you, my lord.


FIRST MURDERER

Take that, and that. [He stabs CLARENCE] If all this won't do the job, then I'll drown you in that wine barrel.

He exits with the body.

SECOND MURDERER

A bloody deed, and desperately done. I wish I could wash my hands of this sad murder, as Pontius Pilate did. .

 Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor who condemned Jesus to die. Trying to cleanse himself of guilt, Pilate washed his hands after turning over Jesus to a mob.

The FIRST MURDERER returns.

FIRST MURDERER

What's going on? What's wrong with you, that you didn't help me? By God, the duke will hear about how you've neglected your duty.

SECOND MURDERER

I wish he could hear that I had saved his brother. You take the reward, and tell him what I've said. I'm sorry that the Duke of Clarence has been killed.

He exits.

FIRST MURDERER

I'm not sorry. Go, coward that you are. Well, I'll go hide the body in some hole until the Duke of Gloucester gives orders for its burial. And when I have my reward, I'll flee. For this murder will be found out, and I must not be around then.

He exits.

Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Flourish. Enter KING EDWARD IV, sick, QUEEN ELIZABETH, Lord Marquess DORSET, RIVERS, HASTINGS, BUCKINGHAM, GREY, and others

KING EDWARD

Why, so. Now have I done a good day's work.
You peers, continue this united league.
I every day expect an embassy
From my Redeemer to redeem me hence,
5 And more in peace my soul shall part to heaven
Since I have made my friends at peace on earth
Rivers and Hastings, take each other's hand.
Dissemble not your hatred. Swear your love.

RIVERS

[taking HASTINGS's hand] By heaven, my soul is purged
10 from grudging hate,
And with my hand I seal my true heart's love.

HASTINGS

So thrive I as I truly swear the like.

KING EDWARD

Take heed you dally not before your king,
Lest He that is the supreme King of kings
15 Confound your hidden falsehood, and award
Either of you to be the other's end.

HASTINGS

So prosper I as I swear perfect love.

RIVERS

And I as I love Hastings with my heart.

KING EDWARD

[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]
20 Madam, yourself is not exempt in this,—
Nor you, son Dorset, —Buckingham, nor you.
You have been factious one against the other.—
Wife, love Lord Hastings. Let him kiss your hand,
And what you do, do it unfeignedly.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

25 There, Hastings, I will never more remember
Our former hatred, so thrive I and mine.

HASTINGS kisses her hand

KING EDWARD

Dorset, embrace him.—Hastings, love Lord Marquess.

DORSET

This interchange of love, I here protest,
Upon my part shall be inviolable.

HASTINGS

30 And so swear I.

They embrace

KING EDWARD

Now, princely Buckingham, seal thou this league
With thy embracements to my wife's allies
And make me happy in your unity.

BUCKINGHAM

[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]
35 Whenever Buckingham doth turn his hate

Trumpets sound. KING EDWARD IV enters, sick, with QUEEN ELIZABETH, the Lord Marquess of DORSET, RIVERS, HASTINGS, BUCKINGHAM, GREY, and others.

KING EDWARD

Well, now I've done a good day's work. You must all
maintain this unity and friendship. Every day I expect a
messenger of God to bear me away from here, and I can
leave for heaven in peace now that my friends have made
their peace on earth. Rivers and Hastings, take each other's
hand. Don't just hide your hatred under a facade of
friendship. Swear your love for each other.

RIVERS

[Taking HASTINGS' hand] By heaven, my soul is now
cleansed of all grudges and hatred. With this handshake I
swear that this love is true.

HASTINGS

So may I prosper, as I swear the same thing.

KING EDWARD

Make sure that you don't mock your king by lying in front of
him. Otherwise God, the supreme King of Kings, will
uncover your hidden lies and cause you to be the death of
each other.

HASTINGS

I swear perfect love for Rivers, or may I never prosper.

RIVERS

And I love Hastings with all my heart.

KING EDWARD

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Madam, you're not exempt from
this.

[To DORSET] Nor are you, Dorset.

[To BUCKINGHAM] Nor you, Buckingham. You have all been
too quarrelsome with each other in the past.

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] My wife, I ask you to befriend Lord
Hastings. Let him kiss your hand, and do it with sincerity.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Here's my hand, Hastings. I will forget all our past hatred for
each other, and may we both prosper in the future.

HASTINGS kisses her hand.

KING EDWARD

Now Dorset, hug Hastings. Hastings, befriend Lord
Marquess of Dorset.

DORSET

I swear that I will never go back on this exchange of love
and friendship.

HASTINGS

And I swear it too.

They hug.

KING EDWARD

Now, princely Buckingham, seal this friendship by
embracing my wife's allies, and through your unity make
me happy.

BUCKINGHAM

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] If I should ever come to hate your
Grace, and fail to love and cherish you and your relatives,

Upon your Grace, but with all duteous love
 Doth cherish you and yours, God punish me
 With hate in those where I expect most love.
 When I have most need to employ a friend,
 40 And most assurèd that he is a friend,
 Deep, hollow, treacherous, and full of guile
 Be he unto me: this do I beg of God
 When I am cold in love to you or yours.

They embrace

KING EDWARD

A pleasing cordial, princely Buckingham,
 45 Is this thy vow unto my sickly heart.
 There wanteth now our brother Gloucester here
 To make the blessed period of this peace.

BUCKINGHAM

And in good time,
 Here comes Sir Richard Ratcliffe and the duke.

Enter RICHARD and RATCLIFFE

RICHARD

50 Good morrow to my sovereign king and queen,
 And, princely peers, a happy time of day.

KING EDWARD

Happy indeed, as we have spent the day.
 Brother, we have done deeds of charity,
 Made peace of enmity, fair love of hate,
 55 Between these swelling, wrong-incensèd peers.

RICHARD

A blessed labor, my most sovereign lord.
 Amongst this princely heap, if any here
 By false intelligence, or wrong surmise
 Hold me a foe,
 60 If I unwittingly, or in my rage,
 Have aught committed that is hardly borne
 By any in this presence, I desire
 To reconcile me to his friendly peace.
 'Tis death to me to be at enmity;
 65 I hate it, and desire all good men's love.
 First, madam, I entreat true peace of you,
 Which I will purchase with my duteous service;—
 Of you, my noble cousin Buckingham,
 If ever any grudge were lodged between us;—
 70 Of you, Lord Rivers, and Lord Gray of you,
 Dukes, earls, lords, gentlemen; indeed of all!
 I do not know that Englishman alive
 With whom my soul is any jot at odds
 More than the infant that is born tonight.
 75 I thank my God for my humility.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

A holy day shall this be kept hereafter.
 I would to God all strifes were well compounded.
 My sovereign lord, I do beseech your Highness
 To take our brother Clarence to your grace.

RICHARD

80 Why, madam, have I offered love for this,
 To be so flouted in this royal presence?
 Who knows not that the gentle duke is dead?

They all start

You do him injury to scorn his corse.

KING EDWARD

Who knows not he is dead! Who knows he is?

may God punish me by making me find hatred where I
 expect love. When I most need a friend and am sure that my
 friends are trustworthy, may they turn false, treacherous,
 and full of deceit. I beg that God will do this if I ever lose my
 love for you and your allies.

They hug.

KING EDWARD

Noble Buckingham, your vow of friendship is like medicine
 for my sickly heart. Now all we need is my brother Richard
 to bring the blessed conclusion to this time of peace.

BUCKINGHAM

And just in time, here comes Richard with Sir Richard
 Ratcliffe.

RICHARD and RATCLIFFE enter.

RICHARD

Good morning to my sovereign king and queen. And I'm
 happy to see you too, my princely peers.

KING EDWARD

Happy indeed--that's the way we've spent the day. Brother,
 we have done deeds of love, turning enmity to peace and
 hatred to love between these misguidedly angry nobles.

RICHARD

A blessed labor, my sovereign lord. If any among this
 princely group considers me an enemy—whether from lies
 they've heard about me, or because by accident or in anger
 I've done something to give offense—I want us to be
 reconciled and become peaceful friends. To be enemies
 with anyone is like death to me; I hate it, and only desire the
 love of all good men.

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] First, madam, I ask that there be
 true peace between us, and I will purchase it with my
 obedient service.

[To BUCKINGHAM] And you, my noble cousin Buckingham,
 if there was ever any grudge between us, let it be forgotten.

[To RIVERS and GREY and others] And I also want peace
 with you, Lord Rivers, and Lord Grey, and indeed all of you,
 dukes, earls, lords, gentlemen, everyone! I can't think of
 any Englishman alive with whom my soul is at odds. My
 soul is as free from conflict as that of a newborn infant. I
 thank God for my humility.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

This will be remembered as a holy day. I wish to God that all
 troubles could end this well. But I must also ask your
 Highness to pardon your brother Clarence.

RICHARD

Why, madam, have I offered you my love only to be mocked
 in front of the king? Who doesn't know that the gentle duke
 is dead?

They all look shocked.

You do him wrong to joke about his death.

KING EDWARD

Who doesn't know that he's dead? Who knew that he was!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

85 All-seeing heaven, what a world is this!

BUCKINGHAM

Look I so pale, Lord Dorset, as the rest?

DORSET

Ay, my good lord, and no one in the presence
But his red color hath forsook his cheeks.

KING EDWARD

Is Clarence dead? The order was reversed.

RICHARD

90 But he, poor man, by your first order died,
And that a wingèd Mercury did bear.
Some tardy cripple bear the countermand,
That came too lag to see him buried.
God grant that some, less noble and less loyal,
95 Nearer in bloody thoughts, and not in blood,
Deserve not worse than wretched Clarence did,
And yet go current from suspicion.

Enter Lord STANLEY, Earl of Derby

STANLEY

[kneeling] A boon, my sovereign, for my service done.

KING EDWARD

I prithee, peace. My soul is full of sorrow.

STANLEY

100 I will not rise unless your Highness hear me.

KING EDWARD

Then say at once what is it thou requests.

STANLEY

The forfeit, sovereign, of my servant's life,
Who slew today a riotous gentleman
Lately attendant on the duke of Norfolk.

KING EDWARD

105 Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,
And shall the tongue give pardon to a slave?
My brother killed no man; his fault was thought,
And yet his punishment was bitter death.
Who sued to me for him? Who, in my wrath,
110 Kneeled at my feet, and bade me be advised?
Who spoke of brotherhood? Who spoke of love?
Who told me how the poor soul did forsake
The mighty Warwick and did fight for me?
Who told me, in the field by Tewkesbury,
115 When Oxford had me down, he rescued me,
And said "Dear brother, live, and be a king?"
Who told me, when we both lay in the field
Frozen almost to death, how he did lap me
Even in his garments and did give himself,
120 All thin and naked, to the numb-cold night?
All this from my remembrance brutish wrath
Sinfully plucked, and not a man of you
Had so much grace to put it in my mind.
But when your carters or your waiting vassals
125 Have done a drunken slaughter and defaced
The precious image of our dear Redeemer,
You straight are on your knees for pardon, pardon,
And I, unjustly too, must grant it you.
[STANLEY rises]
130 But for my brother, not a man would speak,
Nor I, ungracious, speak unto myself
For him, poor soul. The proudest of you all
Have been beholding to him in his life,

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh all-seeing God, what a terrible world!

BUCKINGHAM

Do I look as pale as everyone else, Lord Dorset?

DORSET

Yes, my good lord. Everyone here in the king's presence has
gone totally pale.

KING EDWARD

Is Clarence dead? The death sentence had been reversed.

RICHARD

But Clarence died by your first order, the poor man. The
death sentence must have been carried by Mercury, the
winged messenger god, while the counter-order was carried
by some slow cripple. It arrived too late even for his burial.
It seems that someone less noble and less loyal—nearer in
bloody thoughts but not a blood relation—deserves the
punishment that poor Clarence got, but instead goes free
without suspicion.

Lord STANLEY, Earl of Derby, enters.

STANLEY

[Kneeling] I must ask you a favor in return for the service
I've done for you, my king.

KING EDWARD

Quiet, please. My soul is full of sorrow.

STANLEY

I will not rise until your Highness hears my request.

KING EDWARD

Then quickly say what it is you want.

STANLEY

I ask you to spare the life of my servant, who just today
killed a rowdy gentleman that used to serve the Duke of
Norfolk.

KING EDWARD

I was willing to condemn my own brother to death, and
now you want me to pardon a servant? My brother Clarence
didn't kill anyone. His only fault was his ideas, and yet he
was punished with bitter death. Who pled on *his* behalf?
When I was so angry, who kneeled at my feet and asked me
to think about what I was doing? Who spoke to me about
brotherhood? Who spoke about love? Who told me how the
poor soul abandoned his father-in-law—the mighty Earl of
Warwick—to come fight for me? Who told me of the
battlefield at Tewkesbury, where Clarence rescued me
when Oxford had me down, saying, "Dear brother, live, and
be a king?" Who told me how, when we both lay in the field
almost freezing to death, he wrapped me in his own clothes
and left himself naked, exposed to the mercy of the
numbingly cold night? All this seemed erased from my
memory in my brutish rage, and not a man of you had the
grace to remind me. But when your servants drunkenly kill
someone and scorn the law of our dear Christ, you
immediately get on your knees and beg, "pardon, pardon."
And I, unfair as I am, must give it to you.

[Stanley rises] But no one spoke on behalf my brother, and
I didn't speak to myself on his behalf either, the poor soul.
Even the proudest among you owed him something, and
yet none of you would beg for his life. Oh God, I fear that
your justice will punish me and all these gathered here, and
our families as well, because of this!

[To HASTINGS] Come, Hastings, help me to my room.

Yet none of you would once beg for his life.

135 O God, I fear Thy justice will take hold
On me and you, and mine and yours for this!—
Come, Hastings, help me to my closet.—
Ah, poor Clarence.

Exeunt some with KING EDWARD IV and QUEEN ELIZABETH

RICHARD

This is the fruits of rashness. Marked you not
140 How that the guilty kindred of the queen
Looked pale when they did hear of Clarence' death?
O, they did urge it still unto the king.
God will revenge it. Come, lords, will you go
To comfort Edward with our company?

BUCKINGHAM

145 We wait upon your Grace.

Exeunt

[To himself] Ah, poor Clarence!

Some exit with KING EDWARD IV and QUEEN ELIZABETH.

RICHARD

This sorrow is the result of recklessness. Didn't you notice
how the queen's guilty relatives turned pale when they
heard about Clarence's death? Oh, they were always urging
the king to do it. God will revenge it. Come, lords, will you
come with me to comfort Edward with our companionship?

BUCKINGHAM

We will attend you, your Grace.

They all exit.

Act 2, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter the old DUCHESS of York, with the two children of Clarence

BOY

Good grandam, tell us, is our father dead?

DUCHESS

No, boy.

GIRL

Why do you weep so oft, and beat your breast,
And cry, "O Clarence, my unhappy son?"

BOY

5 Why do you look on us and shake your head,
And call us orphans, wretches, castaways,
If that our noble father were alive?

DUCHESS

My pretty cousins, you mistake me both.
I do lament the sickness of the king,
10 As loath to lose him, not your father's death.
It were lost sorrow to wail one that's lost.

BOY

Then, you conclude, my grandam, he is dead.
The king mine uncle is to blame for it.
God will revenge it, whom I will importune
15 With earnest prayers, all to that effect.

GIRL

And so will I.

DUCHESS

Peace, children, peace. The king doth love you well.
Incapable and shallow innocents,
You cannot guess who caused your father's death.

BOY

20 Grandam, we can, for my good uncle Gloucester
Told me the king, provoked to it by the queen,
Devised impeachments to imprison him;
And when my uncle told me so, he wept,
And pitied me, and kindly kissed my cheek,

25

Shakesclare Translation

The old DUCHESS of York enters with CLARENCE's two children, a BOY and a GIRL.

BOY

Good grandmother, tell us, is our father dead?

DUCHESS

No, boy.

GIRL

Then why do you weep so often, and beat your chest, and
cry, "Oh, Clarence, my unlucky son?"

BOY

If our noble father is still alive, why do you look at us and
shake your head, and call us orphans, wretches, and
castaways?

DUCHESS

My pretty grandchildren, you both misunderstand me. I'm
lamenting the sickness of the king, because I don't want to
lose him. I'm not lamenting your father's death. It would be
wasted sorrow to cry over someone who's already dead.

BOY

Then, my grandmother, you're admitting that our father is
dead. My uncle, the king, is to blame for it. God will revenge
it, and I'll pray earnestly every day that he does so.

GIRL

And so will I.

DUCHESS

Quiet, children, quiet. The king loves you both very much.
You innocent, naive children, you cannot guess who caused
your father's death.

BOY

But we can, grandmother, for my good uncle Richard told
me. He said that the king was provoked by the queen to
make up accusations against my father that would get him
arrested. When my uncle told me about this he wept, and
pitied me, and kindly kissed my cheek. He told me that I

Bade me rely on him as on my father,
And he would love me dearly as a child.

DUCHESS

Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shape,
And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice.
He is my son, ay, and therein my shame,
30 Yet from my dugs he drew not this deceit.

BOY

Think you my uncle did dissemble, grandam?

DUCHESS

Ay, boy.

BOY

I cannot think it. Hark, what noise is this?

*Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, with her hair about her ears, RIVERS, and
DORSET after her*

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, who shall hinder me to wail and weep,
35 To chide my fortune and torment myself?
I'll join with black despair against my soul
And to myself become an enemy.

DUCHESS

What means this scene of rude impatience?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To make an act of tragic violence.
40 Edward, my lord, thy son, our king, is dead.
Why grow the branches when the root is gone?
Why wither not the leaves that want their sap?
If you will live, lament. If die, be brief,
That our swift-winged souls may catch the king's,
45 Or, like obedient subjects, follow him
To his new kingdom of ne'er-changing night.

DUCHESS

Ah, so much interest have I in thy sorrow
As I had title in thy noble husband.
I have bewept a worthy husband's death
50 And lived with looking on his images;
But now two mirrors of his princely semblance
Are cracked in pieces by malignant death,
And I, for comfort, have but one false glass
That grieves me when I see my shame in him.
55 Thou art a widow, yet thou art a mother,
And hast the comfort of thy children left,
But death hath snatched my husband from mine arms
And plucked two crutches from my feeble hands,
Clarence and Edward. O, what cause have I,
60 Thine being but a moiety of my moan,
To overgo thy woes and drown thy cries!

BOY

[to QUEEN ELIZABETH] Ah, aunt, you wept not for
our father's death.
How can we aid you with our kindred tears?

GIRL

65 Our fatherless distress was left unmoaned.
Your widow-dolor likewise be unwept!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Give me no help in lamentation.
I am not barren to bring forth complaints.
All springs reduce their currents to mine eyes,
70 That I, being governed by the watery moon,

could rely on him as if he were my father, and that he would
love me as dearly as if I were his child.

DUCHESS

Ah, it's terrible that liars can steal the appearance of gentle
people, and hide their wickedness under a virtuous mask.
Yes, he is my son. And in being my son, he is the source of
my shame as a mother. But he didn't get his deceitfulness
from my breast.

BOY

Do you think that my uncle was lying, grandmother?

DUCHESS

Yes, boy.

BOY

I can't believe it. Wait, what's that noise?

*QUEEN ELIZABETH enters, grieving and with her hair
undone, followed by RIVERS and DORSET.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, who can stop me from wailing and weeping, cursing my
bad luck, and tormenting myself? I'll ally myself with the
black despair that threatens my soul, and become my own
enemy.

DUCHESS

What do you mean by this melodramatic scene?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I'm performing the violent tragedy of my life. Edward—my
husband, your son, our king—is dead. Why should we keep
living when our leader and lifeblood is gone? How can the
branches keep growing when the root is gone? Why aren't
the leaves withering now that the sap is dried up? If you will
live, then lament. If you will die, then be quick about it, so
our swift-winged souls might catch up with the king's—or at
least follow him, like obedient subjects, into his new
kingdom of never-ending night.

DUCHESS

Ah, I was your noble husband's mother, so I have just as
large a share in your grief. I've already wept over my own
worthy husband's death and kept myself alive only by
looking at his sons, his mirror images. But now two of those
mirrors have been cracked into pieces by death, and the
only one left to comfort me is Richard—an untrustworthy
mirror who only causes me shame and grief. You are a
widow, but you're also a mother, and you still have the
comfort of your children left. But death has snatched my
husband from my arms and then plucked my two crutches,
Clarence and Edward, from my feeble hands. Oh, I have
every reason to surpass you in sorrow and drown out your
weeping with my own, as your loss is only half of mine!

BOY

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Oh, Aunt, you didn't weep for our
father's death. So why would we help you with our tears?

GIRL

You didn't mourn with us when we were left fatherless. Your
sadness as a widow will likewise go unmourned by us!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I don't need any help in mourning. I am full of sorrows to
complain about. May all the earth's springs keep my eyes
replenished with tears, so that when the tide is high in the

May send forth plenteous tears to drown the world.
Ah, for my husband, for my dear lord Edward!

CHILDREN

Ah, for our father, for our dear lord Clarence!

DUCHESS

Alas for both, both mine, Edward and Clarence!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

75 What stay had I but Edward? And he's gone.

CHILDREN

What stay had we but Clarence? And he's gone.

DUCHESS

What stays had I but they? And they are gone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Was never widow had so dear a loss.

CHILDREN

Were never orphans had so dear a loss.

DUCHESS

80 Was never mother had so dear a loss.
Alas, I am the mother of these griefs.
Their woes are parceled; mine are general.
She for an Edward weeps, and so do I;
I for a Clarence weep; so doth not she.

85 These babes for Clarence weep and so do I;
I for an Edward weep; so do not they.
Alas, you three, on me, threefold distressed,
Pour all your tears. I am your sorrow's nurse,
And I will pamper it with lamentations.

DORSET

90 *[To QUEEN ELIZABETH]* Comfort, dear mother. God is
much displeased
That you take with unthankfulness, his doing.
In common worldly things, 'tis called ungrateful
With dull unwillingness to repay a debt
95 Which with a bounteous hand was kindly lent;
Much more to be thus opposite with heaven,
For it requires the royal debt it lent you.

RIVERS

Madam, bethink you, like a careful mother,
Of the young prince your son. Send straight for him.
100 Let him be crowned. In him your comfort lives.
Drown desperate sorrow in dead Edward's grave
And plant your joys in living Edward's throne.

Enter RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, STANLEY, HASTINGS, and RATCLIFFE

RICHARD

Sister, have comfort. All of us have cause
To wail the dimming of our shining star,
105 But none can help our harms by wailing them.—
Madam, my mother, I do cry you mercy;
I did not see your Grace. Humbly on my knee
I crave your blessing.

He kneels

DUCHESS

God bless thee, and put meekness in thy breast,
110 Love, charity, obedience, and true duty.

ocean of my weeping, I can drown the world. Ah, for my
husband, my dear lord Edward!

CHILDREN

Ah, for our father, for our dear lord Clarence!

DUCHESS

Alas for both Edward and Clarence, both mine!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What support did I have besides Edward? And he's dead.

CHILDREN

What support did we have besides Clarence? And he's dead.

DUCHESS

What supports did I have besides both of them? And they
are dead.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

A widow never suffered so great a loss.

CHILDREN

Orphans never suffered so great a loss.

DUCHESS

A mother never suffered so great a loss. Alas, I am the
mother of these griefs. Each of you has only a single loss,
while I suffer all of them. Elizabeth weeps for Edward, and
so do I, but she does not weep for Clarence like I do. These
children weep for Clarence, and so do I, but they don't
weep for Edward like I do. You three should pour all your
tears onto me. I will be your sorrow's nurse, and feed your
tears with more mourning.

DORSET

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Dear Mother, let yourself be
comforted. God is displeased that you respond to his
doings so unthankfully. In everyday business, it's
considered ungrateful if someone is unwilling to repay a
debt which was generously loaned in the first place. It's
much worse to be so opposed to heaven, now that it
requires the royal debt it lent to you.

RIVERS

Madam, think of your son, the young prince, and be a
careful mother. Send for him right away. Let him be
crowned king. He is your hope for future peace of mind.
Drown your desperate sorrows in dead Edward's grave, and
plant your future joys in Prince Edward's new throne.

*RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, STANLEY, HASTINGS, and
RATCLIFFE enter.*

RICHARD

Sister, let yourself be comforted. All of us have reason to
mourn the dimming of the king, our shining star, but none
of us can help anything by wailing.

[To DUCHESS] Oh madam, my mother, I beg your pardon. I
didn't see your Grace. On my knees, I humbly ask for your
blessing.

He kneels.

DUCHESS

God bless you, and fill you with humility, love, charity,
obedience, and true duty.

RICHARD

[standing] Amen. *[aside]* And make me die a good old man!

That is the butt end of a mother's blessing;
I marvel that her Grace did leave it out.

BUCKINGHAM

- 115 You cloudy princes and heart-sorrowing peers
That bear this heavy mutual load of moan,
Now cheer each other in each other's love.
Though we have spent our harvest of this king,
We are to reap the harvest of his son.
- 120 The broken rancor of your high-swoll'n hates,
But lately splintered, knit, and joined together,
Must gently be preserved, cherished, and kept.
Meseemeth good that with some little train
Forthwith from Ludlow the young prince be fet
- 125 Hither to London, to be crowned our king.

RIVERS

Why "with some little train," my Lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

- Marry, my lord, lest by a multitude
The new-healed wound of malice should break out,
Which would be so much the more dangerous
- 130 By how much the estate is green and yet ungoverned.
Where every horse bears his commanding rein
And may direct his course as please himself,
As well the fear of harm as harm apparent,
In my opinion, ought to be prevented.

RICHARD

- 135 I hope the king made peace with all of us;
And the compact is firm and true in me.

RIVERS

- And so in me, and so, I think, in all.
Yet since it is but green, it should be put
To no apparent likelihood of breach,
- 140 Which haply by much company might be urged.
Therefore I say with noble Buckingham
That it is meet so few should fetch the prince.

HASTINGS

And so say I.

RICHARD

- Then be it so, and go we to determine
145 Who they shall be that straight shall post to Ludlow.—
Madam, and you, my sister, will you go
To give your censures in this business?

Exeunt all but BUCKINGHAM and RICHARD

BUCKINGHAM

- My lord, whoever journeys to the prince,
For God's sake let not us two at home.
- 150 For by the way I'll sort occasion,
As index to the story we late talked of,
To part the queen's proud kindred from the prince.

RICHARD

- My other self, my council's consistory,
My oracle, my prophet, my dear cousin,
- 155 I, as a child, will go by thy direction
Toward Ludlow then, for we'll not stay behind.

Exeunt

RICHARD

[Standing up] Amen.

[To himself] And make me die a good old man! That should be the conclusion of a mother's blessing. I'm surprised that she left it out.

BUCKINGHAM

You weeping princes and sorrowful nobles who bear this mutual weight of grief, let us now cheer each other up with our love. Though we have lost our old, fruitful king, we will now reap the harvest of his son. Our former hatreds were only recently broken and then rejoined as friendship, and now we must gently preserve, cherish, and keep this new goodwill. It seems like a good idea that a small group of us should now set out for Ludlow Castle in Wales, to fetch the young prince and bring him here to London, where he will be crowned our king.

RIVERS

Why only a "small group," my Lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

Well, my lord, if a large group goes, the newly-healed hostilities between us might break out again. This could be very dangerous, as the Yorkist rule is still new and untested. We should prevent a situation where it seems like every man is out for himself, with everyone paranoid about imagined enemies.

RICHARD

The king tried to make peace among all of us, and I hope he succeeded. For me, at least, those vows of friendship were firm and true.

RIVERS

And for me also. And so, I think, for all of us. But since our agreement is so fresh, we shouldn't risk putting it under too much stress—which might happen if all of us go at once to fetch the prince. So I agree with noble Buckingham that it's best for only a few to go.

HASTINGS

And I agree.

RICHARD

Then we'll do that. Now let's go and figure out which of us will ride off to Ludlow.

[To DUCHESS and QUEEN ELIZABETH] Mother, and you, my sister-in-law, will you go and offer your judgments in this business?

Everyone exits except for BUCKINGHAM and RICHARD.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, whoever ends up journeying to meet the prince, for God's sake let us be part of the group. Along the way I'll create an opportunity to separate him from the queen's proud relatives—as the first step in the plan we discussed recently.

RICHARD

My dear cousin, you are my other self, my council of advisors, my oracle, my prophet! I will let you lead me like a child. Let's go to Wales then, for we won't stay behind.

They exit.

Act 2, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter one CITIZEN at one door, and another at the other

FIRST CITIZEN

Good morrow, neighbor, whither away so fast?

SECOND CITIZEN

I promise you I scarcely know myself.
Hear you the news abroad?

FIRST CITIZEN

Yes, that the king is dead.

SECOND CITIZEN

5 Ill news, by 'r Lady. Seldom comes the better.
I fear, I fear, 'twill prove a giddy world.

Enter THIRD CITIZEN

THIRD CITIZEN

Neighbors, God speed.

FIRST CITIZEN

Give you good morrow, sir.

THIRD CITIZEN

Doth this news hold of good King Edward's death?

SECOND CITIZEN

10 Ay, sir, it is too true, God help the while.

THIRD CITIZEN

Then, masters, look to see a troublous world.

FIRST CITIZEN

No, no, by God's good grace, his son shall reign.

THIRD CITIZEN

Woe to the land that's governed by a child.

SECOND CITIZEN

15 In him there is a hope of government,
Which, in his nonage, council under him,
And, in his full and ripened years, himself,
No doubt shall then, and till then, govern well.

FIRST CITIZEN

So stood the state when Henry the Sixth
Was crowned in Paris but at nine months old.

THIRD CITIZEN

20 Stood the state so? No, no, good friends, God wot,
For then this land was famously enriched
With politic grave counsel; then the king
Had virtuous uncles to protect his Grace.

FIRST CITIZEN

Why, so hath this, both by the father and mother.

THIRD CITIZEN

25 Better it were they all came by his father,
Or by the father there were none at all,
For emulation who shall now be nearest
Will touch us all too near if God prevent not.
O, full of danger is the duke of Gloucester,

30

Shakescleare Translation

Two CITIZENS enter from different sides of the stage.

FIRST CITIZEN

Good morning, neighbor. Where are you hurrying off to?

SECOND CITIZEN

I swear, I hardly know where I'm going myself. Have you heard the news going around?

FIRST CITIZEN

Yes, that the king is dead.

SECOND CITIZEN

Bad news, by the Virgin Mary. The news is always bad, and likely to get worse. I fear that the world will go crazy.

A THIRD CITIZEN enters.

THIRD CITIZEN

Hello, neighbors.

FIRST CITIZEN

Good morning to you, sir.

THIRD CITIZEN

Is the news true that good King Edward has died?

SECOND CITIZEN

Yes, sir, it's too true, God help us.

THIRD CITIZEN

Then be ready for troubled times, sirs.

FIRST CITIZEN

No, no, by God's good grace, his son will become king.

THIRD CITIZEN

It's bad for a country to be ruled by a child.

SECOND CITIZEN

There is hope for the country under his rule, though. A young king who governs wisely under his advisors will govern wisely on his own when he reaches adulthood.

FIRST CITIZEN

That's how it went when Henry the Sixth was crowned in Paris at just nine months old.

THIRD CITIZEN

Is that how it was? No, no, good friends, back then the country was rich with intelligent advisors, and the king had virtuous uncles to protect him.

FIRST CITIZEN

Why, this king--Edward's son--has uncles too, on both his father's and his mother's side.

THIRD CITIZEN

It would be better if they were all on his father's side, or if none at all were on his father's side. For as it is, the contest over which uncles will be closest to the king is likely to affect all of us, if God doesn't prevent it. The Duke of Gloucester--Richard--is a dangerous man. And Queen

And the queen's sons and brothers haught and proud,
And were they to be ruled, and not to rule,
This sickly land might solace as before.

FIRST CITIZEN

Come, come, we fear the worst. All will be well.

THIRD CITIZEN

When clouds are seen, wise men put on their cloaks;
35 When great leaves fall, then winter is at hand;
When the sun sets, who doth not look for night?
Untimely storms make men expect a dearth.
All may be well; but if God sort it so,
'Tis more than we deserve or I expect.

SECOND CITIZEN

40 Truly, the hearts of men are full of fear.
Ye cannot reason almost with a man
That looks not heavily and full of dread.

THIRD CITIZEN

Before the days of change, still is it so.
By a divine instinct, men's minds mistrust
45 Ensuing dangers, as by proof we see
The water swell before a boist'rous storm.
But leave it all to God. Whither away?

SECOND CITIZEN

Marry, we were sent for to the justices.

THIRD CITIZEN

And so was I. I'll bear you company.

Exeunt

Elizabeth's sons and brothers are haughty and proud. This sickly country will only have a chance of being healed if they end up as subjects, not rulers.

FIRST CITIZEN

Come, come, we're worrying about the worst possible outcome. I'm sure that everything will be all right.

THIRD CITIZEN

You know what they say: when clouds appear, wise men put on their coats. When leaves fall from the trees, winter is coming. When the sun sets, who doesn't expect night? When storms arrive early, men expect a bad harvest. Everything may be all right, as you say. But if God wills it to turn out all right, that will be more than we deserve, and not what I expect.

SECOND CITIZEN

Truly, the hearts of men are full of fear. There's hardly anyone who isn't unreasonably worried right now.

THIRD CITIZEN

It's always like this before times of great change. By some divine instinct, we get nervous when danger is coming--just like when we see the waves swelling before a storm arrives. But leave it all to God. Where are you off to?

SECOND CITIZEN

Indeed, the judges have sent for us.

THIRD CITIZEN

And for me to. I'll keep you company.

They all exit.

Act 2, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Enter the ARCHBISHOP of York, the young duke of YORK, QUEEN ELIZABETH, and the old DUCHESS of York

ARCHBISHOP

Last night, I hear, they lay at Stony Stratford,
And at Northampton they do rest tonight.
Tomorrow or next day they will be here.

DUCHESS

I long with all my heart to see the prince.
5 I hope he is much grown since last I saw him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But I hear no; they say my son of York
Has almost overta'en him in his growth.

YORK

Ay, mother, but I would not have it so.

DUCHESS

Why, my young cousin? It is good to grow.

YORK

10 Grandam, one night as we did sit at supper,
My uncle Rivers talked how I did grow
More than my brother: "Ay," quoth my uncle Gloucester,
"Small herbs have grace; great weeds do grow apace."

Shakescleare Translation

The ARCHBISHOP of York enters with QUEEN ELIZABETH, her son the young Duke of YORK, and the old DUCHESS of York.

ARCHBISHOP

I hear that last night they slept at Stony Stratford, and tonight they'll rest in Northampton. Tomorrow or the next day they'll be here.

DUCHESS

I long with all my heart to see the prince. I hope he's grown a lot since the last time I saw him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I heard he hasn't though. They say that my son of York has almost passed him in height.

YORK

Yes, Mother, but I wish it weren't so.

DUCHESS

Why, my child? It is good to grow.

YORK

Grandmother, one night while we were eating dinner, my uncle Rivers mentioned that I had grown more than my brother. "Yes," said my uncle Richard, "Small herbs grow with grace, while big weeds grow quickly." And since then,

15 And since, methinks I would not grow so fast
Because sweet flowers are slow and weeds make haste.

DUCHESS

Good faith, good faith, the saying did not hold
In him that did object the same to thee!
He was the wretched'st thing when he was young,
So long a-growing and so leisurely,
20 That if this rule were true, he should be gracious.

YORK

And so no doubt he is, my gracious madam.

DUCHESS

I hope he is, but yet let mothers doubt.

YORK

Now, by my troth, if I had been remembered,
I could have given my uncle's grace a flout
25 To touch his growth nearer than he touched mine.

DUCHESS

How, my pretty York? I prithee let me hear it.

YORK

Marry, they say my uncle grew so fast
That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old.
'Twas full two years ere I could get a tooth.
30 Grandam, this would have been a biting jest.

DUCHESS

I prithee, pretty York, who told thee this?

YORK

Grandam, his nurse.

DUCHESS

His nurse? Why, she was dead ere thou wast born.

YORK

If 'twere not she, I cannot tell who told me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

35 A parlous boy! Go to, you are too shrewd.

DUCHESS

Good madam, be not angry with the child.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Pitchers have ears.

Enter a MESSENGER

ARCHBISHOP

Here comes a messenger. —What news?

MESSENGER

Such news, my lord, as grieves me to report.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

40 How doth the prince?

MESSENGER

Well, madam, and in health.

DUCHESS

What is thy news then?

I've wished that I wouldn't grow so fast, because sweet
flowers are slow, and weeds are hasty.

DUCHESS

Honestly, honestly, that saying certainly didn't hold true for
Richard! He was a terrible child, and took such a long time
to grow up that if that rule were true, he should be a very
gracious adult.

YORK

And no doubt he is, my gracious madam.

DUCHESS

I hope he is, but mothers can have their doubts.

YORK

Now, if I'd considered something I once heard about him, I
could have scoffed at my uncle—and mocked his growth
more than he mocked mine.

DUCHESS

How, my clever York? Let me hear your comeback.

YORK

Well, they say that my uncle grew so fast that he could
gnaw a crust of bread at two hours old. For me, it took two
full years before I could get a single tooth. Grandmother,
this would have been a biting joke.

DUCHESS

Please tell me, clever York, who told you this about him?

YORK

His nurse, grandmother.

DUCHESS

His nurse? Why, she was dead before you were born.

YORK

If it wasn't her, then I can't say who told me.


QUEEN ELIZABETH


A cunning boy! Get out of here, you're too clever for your
own good.

DUCHESS

Good madam, don't be angry with the child.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Little pitchers have wide ears. 

 This saying refers to the fact that
little children can overhear more than
adults want them to.

A MESSENGER enters.

ARCHBISHOP

Here comes a messenger.

[To MESSENGER] What's the news?

MESSENGER

It's news that grieves me to report, my lord.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

How is the prince?

MESSENGER

Madam, he's well and in good health.

DUCHESS

What's your news then?

MESSENGER

Lord Rivers and Lord Grey are sent to Pomfret,
And, with them, Sir Thomas Vaughan, prisoners.

DUCHESS

45 Who hath committed them?

MESSENGER

The mighty dukes, Gloucester and Buckingham.

ARCHBISHOP

For what offence?

MESSENGER

The sum of all I can, I have disclosed.
Why, or for what, the nobles were committed
50 Is all unknown to me, my gracious lord.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ay me! I see the ruin of my house.
The tiger now hath seized the gentle hind.
Insulting tyranny begins to jut
Upon the innocent and aweless throne.
55 Welcome, destruction, blood, and massacre.
I see, as in a map, the end of all.

DUCHESS

Accursèd and unquiet wrangling days,
How many of you have mine eyes beheld?
My husband lost his life to get the crown,
60 And often up and down my sons were tossed
For me to joy, and weep, their gain and loss.
And being seated, and domestic broils
Clean overblown, themselves the conquerors
Make war upon themselves, brother to brother,
65 Blood to blood, self against self. O, preposterous
And frantic outrage, end thy damnèd spleen,
Or let me die, to look on death no more.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

[to YORK] Come, come, my boy. We will to sanctuary.
Madam, farewell.

DUCHESS

70 Stay, I will go with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH


You have no cause.


ARCHBISHOP

[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]
My gracious lady, go,
And thither bear your treasure and your goods.
75 For my part, I'll resign unto your Grace
The seal I keep; and so betide to me
As well I tender you and all of yours.
Go. I'll conduct you to the sanctuary.

Exeunt

MESSENGER

Lord Rivers and Lord Grey have been sent to Pomfret ,
and Sir Thomas Vaughan with them. They're all prisoners.

 Pomfret—or Pontefract—was a castle in Yorkshire often used for political prisoners and executions.

DUCHESS

Who had them arrested?

MESSENGER

The mighty dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham.

ARCHBISHOP

For what crime?

MESSENGER

I've told you all that I know. Why the nobles were arrested,
and on what charges, is all unknown to me, my gracious
lord.


QUEEN ELIZABETH


God help us! I see the ruin of my family. The tiger has now
seized the gentle deer. Brute tyranny begins to attack the
innocent, weak throne. Welcome, destruction, blood, and
massacre! I can see how this will end as clearly as if I was
reading it on a map.

DUCHESS

Oh, how many cursed and violent days of unrest have my
old eyes seen? My husband lost his life to get the crown.
And my sons' lives have been tossed up and down for me to
rejoice over their gains and weep over their losses. And
when one of them gained the throne and got rid of the
domestic quarrels, now the conquerors turn on each other,
making war among themselves—brother against brother,
blood against blood, self against self. Oh, it's a perversion of
the natural order, a frenzied outrage! Let it end—or let me
die--so I won't have to see any more death.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

[To YORK] Come, come, my boy. We'll go take sanctuary .
Madam, farewell.

 In medieval England, civil law was powerless inside of churches, so people could "take sanctuary" there and be safe from the authorities. Queen Elizabeth plans to go to Westminster Abbey.


DUCHESS


Wait, I will go with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You have no reason to.

ARCHBISHOP

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] My gracious lady, go. And take your
money and belongings with you. For my part, I'll reassign
the seal I keep to you , and I'll try to take care of you and
all your relatives. Go, I'll conduct you to the sanctuary.

 The "seal" was a stamp used as a sign of authority. By assigning the seal to Queen Elizabeth, the Archbishop is pledging that he considers her the lawful monarch for now.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

The trumpets sound. Enter the young PRINCE, the CARDINAL, CATESBY, and others

BUCKINGHAM

Welcome, sweet prince, to London, to your chamber.

RICHARD

[to PRINCE] Welcome, dear cousin, my thoughts' sovereign.
The weary way hath made you melancholy.

PRINCE

- 5 No, uncle, but our crosses on the way
Have made it tedious, wearisome, and heavy.
I want more uncles here to welcome me.

RICHARD

- Sweet prince, the untainted virtue of your years
Hath not yet dived into the world's deceit;
10 Nor more can you distinguish of a man
Than of his outward show, which, God He knows,
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart.
Those uncles which you want were dangerous.
Your Grace attended to their sugared words
15 But looked not on the poison of their hearts.
God keep you from them, and from such false friends.

PRINCE

God keep me from false friends, but they were none.

RICHARD

My lord, the mayor of London comes to greet you.

Enter the LORD MAYOR and his train

LORD MAYOR

God bless your Grace with health and happy days.

PRINCE

- 20 I thank you, good my lord, and thank you all.—
I thought my mother and my brother York
Would long ere this have met us on the way.
Fie, what a slug is Hastings that he comes not
To tell us whether they will come or no!

Enter HASTINGS

BUCKINGHAM

- 25 And in good time here comes the sweating lord.

PRINCE

Welcome, my lord. What, will our mother come?

HASTINGS

- On what occasion God He knows, not I,
The Queen your mother and your brother York
Have taken sanctuary. The tender prince
30 Would fain have come with me to meet your Grace,
But by his mother was perforce withheld.

BUCKINGHAM

- Fie, what an indirect and peevish course
Is this of hers! —Lord Cardinal, will your Grace
Persuade the queen to send the duke of York
35 Unto his princely brother presently?—
If she deny, Lord Hastings, go with him,
And from her jealous arms pluck him perforce.

Trumpets sound. The young PRINCE Edward of Wales, the CARDINAL, RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, and others enter.

BUCKINGHAM

Welcome to your room here in London, sweet prince.

RICHARD

Welcome, dear nephew, ruler of my thoughts. It seems that the tiring journey has made you sad.

PRINCE

No, uncle, but the annoyances on the way made the journey tedious, tiring, and dull. I wish more uncles were here to welcome me.

RICHARD

Sweet prince, you are young and innocent, and haven't experienced the deceitfulness of the world yet. You can't perceive the truth about a man except for what he shows on the outside—which, God knows, hardly ever corresponds with his heart. Those uncles you wish for were dangerous. You heard their sugary words, but you couldn't see the poison in their hearts, your Grace. May God protect you from them, and from all such false friends!

PRINCE

May God protect me from false friends—but my uncles weren't false.

RICHARD

My lord, the mayor of London is here to greet you.

The LORD MAYOR and his attendants enter.

LORD MAYOR

May God bless your Grace with health and happy days.

PRINCE

I thank you, my good lord, and thank you all. But I thought my mother and my brother York would have met us on our way long before now. And it's shameful what a slug Hastings is, that he hasn't even come to tell us whether or not they're coming!

HASTINGS enters.

BUCKINGHAM

And just in time, here comes the sweating lord.

PRINCE

Welcome, my lord. Well, is my mother coming?

HASTINGS

Only God knows why, but the queen your mother and your brother York have taken sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. The tender prince wanted to come with me to meet your Grace, but his mother forced him to stay.

BUCKINGHAM

For shame, what a devious and perverse course the queen is taking!

[To the CARDINAL] Lord Cardinal, will you persuade the queen to send the Duke of York to his princely brother at once?

[To HASTINGS] You go too, Lord Hastings. And if she refuses, pluck the boy from her suspicious arms by force.

CARDINAL

My Lord of Buckingham, if my weak oratory
Can from his mother win the duke of York,
40 Anon expect him here; but if she be obdurate
To mild entreaties, God in heaven forbid
We should infringe the holy privilege
Of blessed sanctuary! Not for all this land
Would I be guilty of so deep a sin.

BUCKINGHAM

45 You are too senseless obstinate, my lord,
Too ceremonious and traditional.
Weigh it but with the grossness of this age,
You break not sanctuary in seizing him.
The benefit thereof is always granted
50 To those whose dealings have deserved the place
And those who have the wit to claim the place.
This prince hath neither claimed it nor deserved it
And therefore, in mine opinion, cannot have it.
Then taking him from thence that is not there,
55 You break no privilege nor charter there.
Oft have I heard of sanctuary men,
But sanctuary children, ne'er till now.

CARDINAL

My lord, you shall o'errule my mind for once.—
Come on, Lord Hastings, will you go with me?

HASTINGS

60 I go, my lord.

PRINCE

Good lords, make all the speedy haste you may.

Exeunt CARDINAL and HASTINGS

Say, uncle Gloucester, if our brother come,
Where shall we sojourn till our coronation?

RICHARD

Where it seems best unto your royal self.
65 If I may counsel you, some day or two
Your Highness shall repose you at the Tower;
Then where you please and shall be thought most fit
For your best health and recreation.

PRINCE

I do not like the Tower, of any place.—
70 Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?

BUCKINGHAM

He did, my gracious lord, begin that place,
Which, since, succeeding ages have re-edified.

PRINCE

Is it upon record, or else reported
Successively from age to age, he built it?

BUCKINGHAM

75 Upon record, my gracious lord.

PRINCE

But say, my lord, it were not registered,
Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
As 'twere retailed to all posterity,
Even to the general all-ending day.

RICHARD

80 *[aside]* So wise so young, they say, do never live long.

CARDINAL

My Lord of Buckingham, if my weak words can persuade his
mother to give up the Duke of York, then you can expect
him here soon. But if she resists my mild requests, then God
forbid that we should break the holy laws of sanctuary! I
would not commit such a terrible sin even in exchange for a
kingdom.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, you are foolishly stubborn, and too tied to
formalities and traditions. Consider the moral roughness of
these times, and you'll see that you're not really breaking
sanctuary in seizing him. The benefit of sanctuary is always
given to those who really deserve protection, or those who
are smart enough to claim it. This prince has neither
claimed it nor does he deserve it. Therefore, in my opinion,
he cannot have it. If you seize him from sanctuary when he
was never really taking sanctuary in the first place, then you
aren't breaking any laws or traditions. I've often heard of
"sanctuary men," but until now I've never heard of
"sanctuary children."

CARDINAL

My lord, I'll let you convince me this once.

[To HASTINGS] Come on, Lord Hastings, will you go with
me?

HASTINGS

I will, my lord.

PRINCE

Good lords, go as quickly as you can.

The CARDINAL and HASTINGS exit.

Tell me, Uncle Richard: if my brother comes, where will we
stay until my coronation ceremony?

RICHARD

Wherever seems best for your royal self. If I can advise you,
though, you should stay a day or two in the Tower. After
that you can stay wherever you like, and wherever seems
best for your health and pleasure.

PRINCE

Of all places, I don't like the Tower at all. Didn't Julius
Caesar build it, my lord?

BUCKINGHAM

He began it, my gracious lord. And since then succeeding
generations have added on to it.

PRINCE

Is it on record that he built the Tower, or is it just reported
by word of mouth from generation to generation?

BUCKINGHAM

On record, my gracious lord.

PRINCE

But even if it weren't recorded, I think that the truth would
live on from generation to generation--being told as part of
legend and history--all the way until Judgment Day.

RICHARD

[To himself] They say that those who are so wise when so
young never live long.

PRINCE

What say you, uncle?

RICHARD

I say, without characters fame lives long.
[*aside*] Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,
I moralize two meanings in one word.

PRINCE

85 That Julius Caesar was a famous man.
With what his valor did enrich his wit,
His wit set down to make his valor live.
Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
For now he lives in fame, though not in life.
90 I'll tell you what, my cousin Buckingham—

BUCKINGHAM

What, my gracious lord?

PRINCE

An if I live until I be a man,
I'll win our ancient right in France again
Or die a soldier, as I lived a king.

RICHARD

95 [*aside*] Short summers lightly have a forward spring.

Enter young YORK, HASTINGS, and the CARDINAL

BUCKINGHAM

Now in good time here comes the duke of York.

PRINCE

Richard of York, how fares our loving brother?

YORK

Well, my dread lord—so must I call you now.

PRINCE

100 Ay, brother, to our grief, as it is yours.
Too late he died that might have kept that title,
Which by his death hath lost much majesty.

RICHARD

How fares our cousin, noble Lord of York?

YORK

105 I thank you, gentle uncle. O, my lord,
You said that idle weeds are fast in growth.
The prince my brother hath outgrown me far.

RICHARD

He hath, my lord.

YORK

And therefore is he idle?

RICHARD

O, my fair cousin, I must not say so.

YORK


Then is he more beholding to you than I.


PRINCE

What did you say, uncle?

RICHARD

I said that without written records, fame lives long.

[*To himself*] Like the figure of Sin , I use the double meanings of words to my advantage.

 In medieval morality plays the figure of Sin—or Vice, or Iniquity—was a personification of all sin, and often used double talk to its advantage.


PRINCE


That Julius Caesar was a famous man. His courage aided his intelligence, and his intelligence helped him make sure that his reputation for courage outlived him. Death didn't conquer *that* conqueror. Now he lives on in fame, though not in life. I'll tell you what, my cousin Buckingham—

BUCKINGHAM

What, my gracious lord?

PRINCE

If I live to be a man, I'll conquer France and win back our claim to the throne  there. Otherwise I'll die as a soldier, though I lived as a king.

 During the 14th and 15th centuries, English monarchs had fought in France to claim hereditary lands—including, famously, Henry V. His son Henry VI lost the land he had won.

RICHARD

[*To himself*] Short summers often have an early spring, as they say. Those who die young are usually precocious.

Young YORK, HASTINGS, and the CARDINAL enter.

BUCKINGHAM

Now here comes the Duke of York, right on time.

PRINCE

Richard of York, how are you, my loving brother?

YORK

I'm well, my sovereign lord—for that's what I must call you now.

PRINCE

Yes, Brother, and it's a sad occasion for both of us. Our father--the man who should have kept that title--died too recently. And the sadness of his death makes the title seem much less majestic.

RICHARD

How are you, my nephew, noble Lord of York?

YORK

I thank you for asking, noble uncle. Oh, my lord, you once said that lazy weeds grow quickly. The prince my brother has far outgrown me.

RICHARD

He has, my lord.

YORK

So is he lazy then?

RICHARD

Oh, my fair nephew, I can't say that.

YORK

Then he has more power over you than I do.

RICHARD

110 He may command me as my sovereign,
But you have power in me as in a kinsman.

YORK

I pray you, uncle, give me this dagger.

RICHARD

My dagger, little cousin? With all my heart.

PRINCE

A beggar, brother?

YORK

115 Of my kind uncle, that I know will give,
And being but a toy, which is no grief to give.

RICHARD

A greater gift than that I'll give my cousin.

YORK

A greater gift? O, that's the sword to it.

RICHARD

Ay, gentle cousin, were it light enough.

YORK

120 O, then I see you will part but with light gifts.
In weightier things you'll say a beggar nay.

RICHARD

It is too heavy for your Grace to wear.

YORK

I weigh it lightly, were it heavier.

RICHARD

What, would you have my weapon, little lord?

YORK

125 I would, that I might thank you as you call me.

RICHARD

How?

YORK

Little.

PRINCE

My lord of York will still be cross in talk.
Uncle, your Grace knows how to bear with him.

YORK

130 You mean, to bear me, not to bear with me.—
Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me.
Because that I am little, like an ape,
He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders.

BUCKINGHAM

135 *[aside]* With what a sharp-provided wit he reasons!
To mitigate the scorn he gives his uncle,
He prettily and aptly taunts himself.
So cunning and so young is wonderful.

RICHARD

He may command me as my king, but you still have power
over me as my relative.

YORK

Please give me your dagger, uncle.

RICHARD

My dagger, little Nephew? With all my heart.

PRINCE

Are you begging, Brother?

YORK

Only from my kind uncle. I know he'll give it to me, and it's
not valuable, so it shouldn't make him sad to lose it.

RICHARD

I'll give my nephew a greater gift than that.

YORK

A greater gift? Oh, that must mean a sword.

RICHARD

Yes, noble nephew. That is, if it's light enough for you to
hold.

YORK

Oh, then I see that you'll only part with light, trivial gifts.
You'll refuse a beggar's request in heavier, more valuable
things.

RICHARD

A sword is too heavy for your Grace to wear.

YORK

I'd consider it light and trivial even if it were heavier.

RICHARD

What, do you want *my* weapon, little lord?

YORK

I do, so I can thank you for what you called me.

RICHARD

What do you mean?

YORK


You called me "little."


PRINCE

The Lord of York is always argumentative. Uncle, you know
how to bear with him.

YORK

You mean to bear me, not to bear *with* me.

[To RICHARD] Uncle, my brother is mocking both of us.
Because I'm little, like a monkey, he thinks that you should
bear me on your shoulders, like a fool .

 *Jesters would often carry monkeys on their backs during fairs. York might also be alluding to Richard's hunchback as being a proper seat for a monkey.*

BUCKINGHAM

[To himself] What a sharp and thoughtful mind he has! To
smooth over his mockery of his uncle, he cleverly and
politely mocks himself. It's amazing that he's so cunning
while so young.

RICHARD

[to PRINCE] My lord, will 't please you pass along?
Myself and my good cousin Buckingham
140 Will to your mother, to entreat of her
To meet you at the Tower and welcome you.

YORK

[to PRINCE] What, will you go unto the Tower, my lord?

PRINCE

My lord protector needs will have it so.

YORK

I shall not sleep in quiet at the Tower.

RICHARD

145 Why, what should you fear?

YORK

Marry, my uncle Clarence' angry ghost.
My grandam told me he was murdered there.

PRINCE

I fear no uncles dead.

RICHARD

Nor none that live, I hope.

PRINCE

150 An if they live, I hope I need not fear.
[to YORK] But come, my lord. With a heavy heart,
Thinking on them, go I unto the Tower.

A sennet. Exeunt all but RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, and CATESBY

BUCKINGHAM

155 Think you, my lord, this little prating York
Was not incensèd by his subtle mother
To taunt and scorn you thus opprobriously?

RICHARD

No doubt, no doubt. O, 'tis a parlous boy,
Bold, quick, ingenious, forward, capable.
He is all the mother's, from the top to toe.

BUCKINGHAM

160 Well, let them rest.— Come hither, Catesby.
Thou art sworn as deeply to effect what we intend
As closely to conceal what we impart.
Thou knowest our reasons, urged upon the way.
What thinkest thou? Is it not an easy matter
To make William Lord Hastings of our mind
165 For the installment of this noble duke
In the seat royal of this famous isle?

CATESBY

He, for his father's sake, so loves the prince
That he will not be won to aught against him.

BUCKINGHAM

What think'st thou then of Stanley? Will not he?

CATESBY

170 He will do all in all as Hastings doth.

BUCKINGHAM

Well then, no more but this: go, gentle Catesby,
And, as it were far off, sound thou Lord Hastings

RICHARD

[To the PRINCE] My lord, would you like to continue on? My
good cousin Buckingham and I will go to your mother and
ask her to meet you at the Tower.

YORK

[To the PRINCE] What, are you going to the Tower, my lord?

PRINCE

My Lord Protector Richard insists on it.

YORK

I won't sleep peacefully at the Tower.

RICHARD

Why, what do you have to be afraid of?

YORK

Well, my uncle Clarence's angry ghost. My grandmother
told me he was murdered there.


PRINCE

I'm not afraid of any dead uncle.

RICHARD

Nor living ones, I hope.

PRINCE

If they're still alive, I should hope that I don't need to
fear them .

[To YORK] But come, my lord. I'll think of my lost uncles and
go to the Tower with a heavy heart.

*A trumpet sounds. Everyone except for RICHARD,
BUCKINGHAM, and CATESBY exits.*

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, don't you think that this talkative little York was
encouraged by his deceitful mother to taunt and scorn you
in that outrageous manner?

RICHARD

No doubt, no doubt. Oh, he's a dangerous and cunning
boy—bold, lively, ingenious, outspoken, and capable. He
takes after his mother, from head to toe.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, let's leave them for the moment.

[To CATESBY] Come here, Catesby. You're sworn to do as we
command and never reveal our secrets. You know about
our plans, which we described along the way. What do you
think? Would it be an easy matter to convince Lord Hastings
to join our side, and support us in making the noble Duke
Richard the next king of this glorious country?

CATESBY

Hastings loves the Prince because of his great love for his
father, the late King Edward. We won't be able to convince
him.

BUCKINGHAM


What do you think about Stanley then? Won't he join us?

CATESBY

He'll do whatever Hastings does.

BUCKINGHAM

Well then, just do this, noble Catesby: go and sound out
Lord Hastings regarding our cause. But make it seem like a

 Here, the Prince refers to his
uncles on his mother's side, Rivers
and Grey.

How he doth stand affected to our purpose
 And summon him tomorrow to the Tower
 175 To sit about the coronation.
 If thou dost find him tractable to us,
 Encourage him and show him all our reasons.
 If he be leaden, icy, cold, unwilling,
 Be thou so too, and so break off the talk,
 180 And give us notice of his inclination;
 For we tomorrow hold divided councils,
 Wherein thyself shalt highly be employed.

RICHARD

Commend me to Lord William. Tell him, Catesby,
 His ancient knot of dangerous adversaries
 185 Tomorrow are let blood at Pomfret castle,
 And bid my lord, for joy of this good news,
 Give mistress Shore one gentle kiss the more.

BUCKINGHAM

Good Catesby, go effect this business soundly.

CATESBY

My good lords both, with all the heed I can.

RICHARD

190 Shall we hear from you, Catesby, ere we sleep?

CATESBY

You shall, my lord.

RICHARD

At Crosby Place, there shall you find us both.

Exit CATESBY

BUCKINGHAM

Now, my lord, what shall we do, if we perceive
 Lord Hastings will not yield to our complots?

RICHARD

195 Chop off his head. Something we will determine.
 And look when I am king, claim thou of me
 The earldom of Hereford, and all the moveables
 Whereof the king my brother was possessed.

BUCKINGHAM

I'll claim that promise at your Grace's hands.


RICHARD


200 And look to have it yielded with all kindness.
 Come, let us sup betimes, that afterwards
 We may digest our complots in some form.

Exeunt

vague plan for the distant future. Find out how he feels, and
 summon him to the Tower tomorrow for the coronation. If
 he seems like he could be convinced to join us, then
 encourage him and explain all our reasons to him. If he's
 surly, cold, or unwilling, then you should act like that too,
 and break off the conversation. Let us know how he
 responds, for tomorrow we will hold two separate council
 meetings—one public, and one in secret, only for our
 supporters—and you'll have lots of work to do at them.

RICHARD

Give my regards to Lord Hastings. Tell him, Catesby, that the
 dangerous enemies who have plagued him for years will be
 executed tomorrow at Pomfret Castle. And to celebrate this
 good news, tell him to give Miss Shore an extra [kiss](#) .

 Jane Shore became Hastings' mistress--and also Dorset's--in the years after King Edward's death.

BUCKINGHAM

Good Catesby, go do your work well.

CATESBY

My good lords, I'll do the best I can.

RICHARD

Will we hear from you before we go to sleep, Catesby?

CATESBY

You will, my lord.

RICHARD

You'll find us both at Crosby Place.

CATESBY exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Now, my lord, what will we do if Lord Hastings won't go
 along with our conspiracy?

RICHARD

Chop off his head. We'll come up with something. And when
 I am king, you will have the earldom of Hereford--and all
 the wealth and possessions that go with it--which my
 brother, King Edward, used to own.

BUCKINGHAM

I'll take you up on that promise, your Grace.

RICHARD

And you'll see that I'll give it gladly. Come, let's eat early, so
 that afterwards we can think about our plot further.

They exit.

Act 3, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter a MESSENGER at door of HASTINGS

MESSENGER

[knocking] My lord, my lord.

HASTINGS

[within] Who knocks?

Shakesclare Translation

A MESSENGER enters, knocking at the door of HASTINGS' house.

MESSENGER

[Knocking] My lord, my lord.

HASTINGS

[Offstage] Who's knocking?

MESSENGER

One from the Lord Stanley.

HASTINGS

[within] What is 't o'clock?

MESSENGER

5 Upon the stroke of four.

Enter HASTINGS

HASTINGS

Cannot my Lord Stanley sleep these tedious nights?

MESSENGER

So it appears by that I have to say.
First, he commends him to your noble self.

HASTINGS

What then?

MESSENGER

10 Then certifies your Lordship that this night
He dreamt the boar had razed his helm.
Besides, he says there are two councils kept,
And that may be determined at the one
Which may make you and him to rue at th' other.
15 Therefore he sends to know your Lordship's pleasure,
If you will presently take horse with him
And with all speed post with him toward the north
To shun the danger that his soul divines.

HASTINGS

Go, fellow, go. Return unto thy lord.
20 Bid him not fear the separated council.
His Honor and myself are at the one,
And at the other is my good friend Catesby,
Where nothing can proceed that toucheth us
Whereof I shall not have intelligence.
25 Tell him his fears are shallow, without instance.
And for his dreams, I wonder he's so simple
To trust the mock'ry of unquiet slumbers.
To fly the boar before the boar pursues
Were to incense the boar to follow us
30 And make pursuit where he did mean no chase.
Go, bid thy master rise and come to me,
And we will both together to the Tower,
Where he shall see, the boar will use us kindly.

MESSENGER

I'll go, my lord, and tell him what you say.

Exits.

Enter CATESBY

CATESBY

35 Many good morrows to my noble lord.

HASTINGS

Good morrow, Catesby. You are early stirring.
What news, what news in this our tott'ring state?

CATESBY

It is a reeling world indeed, my lord,
And I believe will never stand upright
40 Till Richard wear the garland of the realm.

HASTINGS

How "wear the garland?" Dost thou mean the crown?

MESSENGER

A messenger from Lord Stanley.

HASTINGS

[Offstage] What time is it?

MESSENGER

Four in the morning.

HASTINGS enters.

HASTINGS

Can't Lord Stanley sleep on this long night?

MESSENGER


It appears not, based on his message. First, he sends his regards to your noble self.

HASTINGS

And what else?

MESSENGER

He then tells your Lordship that tonight he dreamed that the boar cut off his head. He also says that there will be two council meetings tomorrow, and that the results of one meeting may make you and Stanley—who will be at the other—very sorry indeed. Because of this, he wants to know if you'll ride with him to the north as soon as possible, to escape the danger that his soul senses.

 Richard's symbol was the boar. As we've seen before in this play, others--mostly his enemies--refer to him by this animal.

HASTINGS

Go, fellow, go. Return to your lord. Tell him not to worry about the two separate meetings. He and I will be at one meeting, and my good friend Catesby will be at the other. Nothing important can happen at the secret meeting without us hearing about it. Tell your lord that his fears are shadows without evidence. And as for his dreams, I'm surprised that he's so foolish as to trust the imaginings of restless sleep. To flee the boar before he even pursues us would make the boar angry, and incite him to chase us even if he never intended to in the first place. Go tell your master to get up and meet me, and we'll go together to the Tower. There he'll see that the boar will treat us kindly.

MESSENGER

I'll go and tell him what you say, my lord.

He exits.

CATESBY enters.

CATESBY

Good morning to you, my noble lord.

HASTINGS

Good morning, Catesby. You're up early. What's the news in our unsteady kingdom?

CATESBY

It is a crazy world indeed, my lord. And I believe it will never stand upright again until Richard wears the garland of the realm.

HASTINGS

What do you mean, "wears the garland?" Do you mean the crown?

CATESBY

Ay, my good lord.

HASTINGS

I'll have this crown of mine cut from my shoulders
Before I'll see the crown so foul misplaced.

45 But canst thou guess that he doth aim at it?

CATESBY

Ay, on my life, and hopes to find you forward
Upon his party for the gain thereof;
And thereupon he sends you this good news,
That this same very day your enemies,
50 The kindred of the queen, must die at Pomfret.

HASTINGS

Indeed, I am no mourner for that news,
Because they have been still my adversaries.
But that I'll give my voice on Richard's side
To bar my master's heirs in true descent,
55 God knows I will not do it, to the death.

CATESBY

God keep your Lordship in that gracious mind.

HASTINGS

But I shall laugh at this a twelve-month hence,
That they which brought me in my master's hate,
I live to look upon their tragedy.

60 Well, Catesby, ere a fortnight make me older
I'll send some packing that yet think not on 't.

CATESBY

'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord,
When men are unprepared and look not for it.

HASTINGS

O monstrous, monstrous! And so falls it out
With Rivers, Vaughan, Grey; and so 'twill do
With some men else that think themselves as safe
As thou and I, who, as thou know'st, are dear
To princely Richard and to Buckingham.

65

CATESBY

The princes both make high account of you— *[aside]* For
they account his head upon the Bridge.

70

HASTINGS

I know they do, and I have well deserved it.

Enter STANLEY

Come on, come on. Where is your boar-spear, man?
Fear you the boar, and go so unprovided?

STANLEY

My lord, good morrow. —Good morrow, Catesby.—
You may jest on, but, by the Holy Rood,
75 I do not like these several councils, I.

HASTINGS

My lord, I hold my life as dear as you do yours,
And never in my days, I do protest,
Was it so precious to me as 'tis now.
80 Think you but that I know our state secure,
I would be so triumphant as I am?

CATESBY

Yes, my good lord.

HASTINGS


I'll have my head cut from my shoulders before I'll see the
crown so terribly misplaced. But do you think that's his
intention?

CATESBY

Yes, I swear on my life. And he hopes that you'll join his side
and help him. For that reason he sends you this good news:
that this very day your enemies--the queen's relatives--will
die at Pomfret Castle.

HASTINGS

Indeed, I'm not sorry to hear that news, for they have
always been my enemies. But as for the idea that I'd
support Richard's side in keeping my master's true heirs
from the throne—God knows I'll never do it. I'd rather die.

 *Hastings means the sons of the late King Edward IV here, the Prince of Wales and Duke of York.*

CATESBY

May God preserve your Lordship in that noble state of mind.

HASTINGS

But I'll laugh at all this in a year, and rejoice that I could see
tragedy come to those who once convinced King Edward to
hate me. Well, Catesby, before two weeks have passed I'll
send some people packing who won't be expecting it at all.

CATESBY


It's a terrible thing to die when you're unprepared and not
expecting it, my gracious lord.


HASTINGS

Yes, it's monstrous, monstrous! That's how it is for Rivers,
Vaughan, and Grey. And that's how it will be soon for some
other men who think they're as safe as you and I are—we
who are dear to princely Richard and Buckingham.

CATESBY

Those two lords both think highly of you.

[To himself] That is, they think of your head being high on a
pole at London Bridge .

 *In medieval England, the severed heads of executed traitors were placed on visible pikes on London Bridge, to warn others against committing the same crimes.*

HASTINGS

I know they do, and I deserve it.

STANLEY enters.

Come on, come on. Where is your boar-hunting spear, man?
You're afraid of the boar, but you'll go around unarmed?

STANLEY

My lord, good morning.

[To CATESBY] Good morning, Catesby.

[To STANLEY] You may joke, but, by the Holy Cross, I don't
like these two separate meetings.

HASTINGS

My lord, I care about my life as much as you care about
yours, and I swear I care about it as much now as I ever
have. Do you think I would be as confident as I am if I
wasn't certain of our safety?

STANLEY

The lords at Pomfret, when they rode from London,
Were jocund and supposed their states were sure,
And they indeed had no cause to mistrust;
85 But yet you see how soon the day o'ercast.
This sudden stab of rancor I misdoubt.
Pray God, I say, I prove a needless coward!
What, shall we toward the Tower? The day is spent.

HASTINGS

Come, come. Have with you. Wot you what, my lord?
90 Today the lords you talked of are beheaded.

STANLEY

They, for their truth, might better wear their heads
Than some that have accused them wear their hats.
But come, my lord, let's away.

Enter a PURSUIVANT

HASTINGS

Go on before. I'll talk with this good fellow.

Exeunt STANLEY and CATESBY

95 How now, sirrah! How goes the world with thee?

PURSUIVANT

The better that your Lordship please to ask.

HASTINGS

I tell thee, man, 'tis better with me now
Than when thou met'st me last where now we meet.
Then was I going prisoner to the Tower
100 By the suggestion of the queen's allies.
But now, I tell thee—keep it to thyself—
This day those enemies are put to death,
And I in better state than e'er I was.

PURSUIVANT

God hold it, to your Honor's good content!

HASTINGS

105 Gramercy, fellow. There, drink that for me.

Throws him his purse

PURSUIVANT

I thank your Honor.

Exit

Enter a PRIEST

PRIEST

Well met, my lord. I am glad to see your Honor.

HASTINGS

I thank thee, good Sir John, with all my heart.
I am in your debt for your last exercise.
110 Come the next sabbath, and I will content you.

PRIEST

I'll wait upon your Lordship.

STANLEY

When the queen's relatives rode from London, they too
were joyful and felt sure that they were safe. And indeed
they had no reason to worry. But see how quickly the day
grew cloudy for them—now they're imprisoned at Pomfret
Castle. Richard's sudden attack on them makes me worried.
I pray to God that it turns out I'm being cowardly for no
reason. Well, should we go to the Tower? The day has
already begun.

HASTINGS

Come, come. Let's go. Do you know what, my lord? Those
lords you just mentioned—Rivers and Grey—will be
beheaded today.

STANLEY

To be honest, they deserve to keep their heads more than
the people who've accused them deserve to keep their
duke's caps. But come, my lord, let's go.

A PURSUIVANT ⁴ *enters.*

HASTINGS

Go on ahead. I'll talk with this good fellow.

STANLEY and CATESBY exit.

Hello, sir ⁵! How's the world treating you?

PURSUIVANT

Better, now that your Lordship was kind enough to ask.

HASTINGS

I tell you, man, it's better with me now than it was the last
time you met me here. At that time I was on my way to be
imprisoned in the Tower, accused by the queen's allies. But
now, I tell you—and keep this to yourself—those enemies
are being put to death today, and I'm better than ever.

PURSUIVANT

May God preserve your good luck, your Honor!

HASTINGS

Thank you very much, fellow. Here, have a drink on me.

He throws the PURSUIVANT his purse.

PURSUIVANT

I thank your Honor.

The PURSUIVANT exits.

A PRIEST enters.

PRIEST

Hello, my lord. I'm glad to see you.

HASTINGS

I thank you with all my heart, Sir John. I'm in your debt for
your last sermon. Next Sunday I'll give the church a nice
donation.

PRIEST

I'll come to see you, your Lordship.

⁴ A pursuivant is a state messenger with the power to produce warrants.

⁵ In the original text, Hastings uses the word "sirrah," a familiar form of "sir" sometimes used to address people of lower social rank.

HASTINGS whispers in his ear.

Exit PRIEST

Enter BUCKINGHAM

BUCKINGHAM

What, talking with a priest, Lord Chamberlain?
Your friends at Pomfret, they do need the priest;
Your Honor hath no shriving work in hand.

HASTINGS

115 Good faith, and when I met this holy man,
The men you talk of came into my mind.
What, go you toward the Tower?

BUCKINGHAM

I do, my lord, but long I shall not stay there.
I shall return before your Lordship thence.

HASTINGS

120 Nay, like enough, for I stay dinner there.

BUCKINGHAM

[aside] And supper too, although thou know'st it not.—
Come, will you go?

HASTINGS

I'll wait upon your Lordship.

Exeunt

HASTINGS whispers in his ear.

The PRIEST exits.

BUCKINGHAM enters.

BUCKINGHAM

What, talking with a priest, Lord Hastings? Your friends at
Pomfret Castle, they're the ones who need a priest. You,
your Honor, have no deathbed confessions to make.

HASTINGS

Honestly, when I ran into this holy man, I did think of those
men you mention. So, are you going to the Tower?

BUCKINGHAM

I am, my lord. But I won't stay there long. I'll return from
there before your Lordship does.

HASTINGS

That's likely, since I'm staying for lunch there.

BUCKINGHAM

[To himself] And for dinner too, though you don't know it
yet.

[To HASTINGS] Come, will you go with me?

HASTINGS

I'll follow your Lordship.

They exit.

Act 3, Scene 3

Shakespeare

*Enter Sir Richard RATCLIFFE, with halberds, carrying RIVERS, GREY,
and VAUGHAN to death at Pomfret.*

RIVERS

Sir Richard Ratcliffe, let me tell thee this:
Today shalt thou behold a subject die
For truth, for duty, and for loyalty.

GREY

[to RATCLIFFE]

5 God bless the prince from all the pack of you!
A knot you are of damnèd bloodsuckers.

VAUGHAN

[to RATCLIFFE] You live that shall cry woe for this
hereafter.

RATCLIFFE

Dispatch. The limit of your lives is out.

RIVERS

10 O Pomfret, Pomfret! O thou bloody prison,
Fatal and ominous to noble peers!
Within the guilty closure of thy walls,
Richard the Second here was hacked to death,
And, for more slander to thy dismal seat,
15 We give thee up our guiltless blood to drink.

Shakesclare Translation

*Sir Richard RATCLIFFE enters with armed guards, leading
RIVERS, GREY, and VAUGHAN to death at Pomfret.*

RIVERS

Sir Richard Ratcliffe, let me tell you this: today you will
watch a man die for truth, for duty, and for loyalty.

GREY

[To RATCLIFFE] May God protect the prince from the pack of
you! All of you are damned bloodsuckers.

VAUGHAN

[To RATCLIFFE] You'll live to regret this later.

RATCLIFFE

Enough. You've reached the limit of your lives.

RIVERS

Oh, Pomfret, Pomfret! Oh, you bloody prison, fatal to
noblemen! King Richard II was hacked to death within your
guilty walls. And now--to bring greater shame to your
ominous name--we must offer up our innocent lives here.

GREY

Now Margaret's curse is fall'n upon our heads,
When she exclaimed on Hastings, you, and I,
For standing by when Richard stabbed her son.

RIVERS

Then cursed she Richard, then cursed she Buckingham.
20 Then cursed she Hastings. O, remember, God,
To hear her prayer for them, as now for us!
And for my sister and her princely sons,
Be satisfied, dear God, with our true blood,
Which, as thou know'st, unjustly must be spilt.

RATCLIFFE

25 Make haste. The hour of death is expiate.

RIVERS

Come, Grey. Come, Vaughan. Let us all embrace.
[*They embrace*]
Farewell until we meet in heaven.

Exeunt

GREY

Now old Queen Margaret's curse has fallen on our heads,
when she condemned me, Hastings, and you for standing
by while Richard stabbed her son.

RIVERS

Then she cursed Richard, then she cursed Buckingham, and
then she cursed Hastings. Oh, God, remember to hear her
prayer and punish them as you now punish us! But, dear
God, please be satisfied with our blood--which is being
unjustly spilled--and don't punish my sister and her
princely sons.

RATCLIFFE

Hurry up. The hour of death has come.

RIVERS

Come, Grey. Come, Vaughan. Let us all embrace. [*They hug*]
Farewell, until we meet again in heaven.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 4

Shakespeare

*Enter BUCKINGHAM, STANLEY, HASTINGS, the bishop of ELY,
RATCLIFFE, LOVELL, with others, at a table*

HASTINGS

Now, noble peers. the cause why we are met
Is to determine of the coronation.
In God's name, speak. When is the royal day?

BUCKINGHAM

Is all things ready for the royal time?

STANLEY

5 It is, and wants but nomination.

ELY

Tomorrow, then, I judge a happy day.

BUCKINGHAM

Who knows the Lord Protector's mind herein?
Who is most inward with the noble duke?

ELY

Your Grace, we think, should soonest know his mind.

BUCKINGHAM

10 We know each other's faces; for our hearts,
He knows no more of mine than I of yours,
Or I of his, my lord, than you of mine.—
Lord Hastings, you and he are near in love.

HASTINGS

I thank his Grace. I know he loves me well.
15 But for his purpose in the coronation,
I have not sounded him, nor he delivered
His gracious pleasure any way therein.
But you, my honorable lords, may name the time,
And in the duke's behalf I'll give my voice,
20 Which I presume he'll take in gentle part.

Enter RICHARD

Shakescleare Translation

*BUCKINGHAM, DERBY, STANLEY, HASTINGS, the Bishop of
ELY, RATCLIFFE, LOVELL, and others enter and sit at a table.*

HASTINGS

Now, noble peers, we are meeting today to come to a
decision about the coronation. In God's name, speak. When
will the royal day be?

BUCKINGHAM

Is everything ready for the royal event?

STANLEY

Yes, and all we need to do is name the day.

ELY

Then I think tomorrow should be a favorable day.

BUCKINGHAM

Who knows what the Lord Protector Richard thinks about
this? Who is closest to the noble duke?

ELY

We think you would best know his mind, your Grace.

BUCKINGHAM

We know each other's faces. But as for our hearts, he
doesn't know mine any more than I know yours or his, or
you know mine.

[*To HASTINGS*] Lord Hastings, you and he are close friends.

HASTINGS

I thank you for saying that. I know he loves me well. But I
haven't asked him out about the coronation, and he hasn't
told me his preferences about it. But you can name a time,
my honorable lords. And I'll give my vote on the duke's
behalf. I'm sure he won't mind.

RICHARD enters.

ELY

In happy time here comes the duke himself.

RICHARD

My noble lords and cousins all, good morrow.

I have been long a sleeper; but I trust

My absence doth neglect no great design

25 Which by my presence might have been concluded.

BUCKINGHAM

Had you not come upon your cue, my lord,

William Lord Hastings had pronounced your part—

I mean your voice for crowning of the king.

RICHARD

Than my Lord Hastings no man might be bolder.

30 His Lordship knows me well, and loves me well.—

My lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn

I saw good strawberries in your garden there;

I do beseech you, send for some of them.

ELY

Marry and will, my lord, with all my heart.

Exit

RICHARD

35 Cousin of Buckingham, a word with you.

[they move aside]

Catesby hath sounded Hastings in our business

And finds the testy gentleman so hot

As he will lose his head ere give consent

40 His master's child, as worshipfully he terms it,

Shall lose the royalty of England's throne.

BUCKINGHAM

Withdraw yourself awhile. I'll go with you.

Exeunt RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM

STANLEY

We have not yet set down this day of triumph.

Tomorrow, in my judgement, is too sudden,

45 For I myself am not so well provided

As else I would be, were the day prolonged.

Enter Bishop of ELY

ELY

Where is my lord the duke of Gloucester?

I have sent for these strawberries.

HASTINGS

His grace looks cheerfully and smooth this morning.

50 There's some conceit or other likes him well

When that he bids good morrow with such spirit.

I think there's never a man in Christendom

Can lesser hide his love or hate than he,

For by his face straight shall you know his heart.

STANLEY

55 What of his heart perceive you in his face

By any livelihood he showed today?

HASTINGS

Marry, that with no man here he is offended,

For were he, he had shown it in his looks.

STANLEY

I pray God he be not, I say.

ELY

Here comes the duke himself, right on time.

RICHARD

Good morning, my noble lords and kinsmen. I slept late,

but I trust that my absence hasn't delayed any important

decisions that required me to be here.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, if you hadn't shown up when you did, Lord

Hastings would have taken your part. He was going to cast a

vote on your behalf in deciding about the coronation of the

king.

RICHARD

There's no man bolder than Lord Hastings. He knows me

well, and loves me well.

[To the Bishop of ELY] My lord of Ely, the last time I was at

your palace in Holborn I saw some good strawberries in

your garden. Please, send for some of them.

ELY

Indeed, I will do so with pleasure, my lord.

He exits.

RICHARD

Cousin Buckingham, a word with you.

[They move aside and speak so the others can't

hear] Catesby has sounded Hastings about our business,

and he found the quick-tempered gentleman to be so

passionately opposed to our plan that—as Hastings

devotedly put it—he would lose his head before he'd allow

his master's child to lose the throne of England.

BUCKINGHAM

Go to the next room for a while. I'll go with you.

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM exit.

STANLEY

We haven't yet set the date for the triumphant coronation

day. In my opinion, tomorrow is too sudden, for I myself am

not as well prepared as I would be if a later date were set.

The Bishop of ELY returns.

ELY

Where is my lord the Duke of Gloucester? I've sent for those

strawberries.

HASTINGS

His Grace Richard looks so cheerful and calm this morning.

He has some idea or plan that he's pleased about whenever

he says "good morning" with such spirit. I don't think

there's a man in all the Christian kingdoms who's worse at

hiding his love or hate than Richard is. You can know his

heart from looking at his face.

STANLEY

And what do you see in his heart today, based on the cheer

in his face?

HASTINGS

That he's not offended with any man here. If he were, he

would have shown it in his face.

STANLEY

I pray to God that you're right.

Enter RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM

RICHARD

60 I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
That do conspire my death with devilish plots
Of damnèd witchcraft, and that have prevailed
Upon my body with their hellish charms?

HASTINGS

The tender love I bear your Grace, my lord,
65 Makes me most forward in this princely presence
To doom th' offenders, whosoe'er they be.
I say, my lord, they have deservèd death.

RICHARD

Then be your eyes the witness of their evil.
[shows his arm]
70 Look how I am bewitched! Behold mine arm
Is like a blasted sapling withered up;
And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,
Consorted with that harlot, strumpet Shore,
That by their witchcraft thus have markèd me.

HASTINGS

75 If they have done this deed, my noble lord—

RICHARD

If? Thou protector of this damnèd strumpet,
Talk'st thou to me of "ifs?" Thou art a traitor—
Off with his head. Now by Saint Paul I swear
I will not dine until I see the same.—
80 Lovell and Ratcliffe, look that it be done.—
The rest that love me, rise and follow me.

Exeunt all but HASTINGS, RATCLIFFE, and LOVELL

HASTINGS

Woe, woe for England! Not a whit for me,
For I, too fond, might have prevented this.
Stanley did dream the boar did raze his helm,
85 And I did scorn it and disdain to fly.
Three times today my foot-cloth horse did stumble,
And started when he looked upon the Tower,
As loath to bear me to the slaughterhouse.
O, now I need the priest that spake to me!
90 I now repent I told the pursuivant,
As too triumphing, how mine enemies
Today at Pomfret bloodily were butchered,
And I myself secure in grace and favor.
O Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse
95 Is lighted on poor Hastings' wretched head.

RATCLIFFE

Come, come, dispatch. The duke would be at dinner.
Make a short shrift. He longs to see your head.

HASTINGS

O momentary grace of mortal men,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
100 Who builds his hopes in air of your good looks
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready with every nod to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.

LOVELL

Come, come, dispatch. 'Tis bootless to exclaim.

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM enter.

RICHARD

Please tell me, what is the proper punishment for someone
who conspires to kill me with wicked plots and witchcraft—
and who has already plagued my body with hellish magic?

HASTINGS

My love for your Grace makes me say forcefully among all
these lords that the offenders should be executed. My lord,
they deserve death.

RICHARD

Then let your eyes be the witness of their evil.

[He shows his arm] See how I am bewitched! Look at how
my arm has shriveled up like a withered tree branch. This is
the work of King Edward's wife Elizabeth--that monstrous
witch--and her associate, that whorish Jane Shore. They've
done this to me with their witchcraft.

HASTINGS

If they have done this, my noble lord—

RICHARD

"If?" You protector of that damned whore, are you talking to
me about "ifs?" You are a traitor. Off with his head. By Saint
Paul, I swear I won't eat until I see him dead.

[To LOVELL and RATCLIFFE] Lovell and Ratcliffe, see that it
gets done.

[To the others] The rest of you who love me, rise and follow
me.

*Everyone except for HASTINGS, RATCLIFFE, and LOVELL
exits.*

HASTINGS

Woe, woe for England! I pity her fate, but save no pity for
myself. I might have prevented this, but I was too foolish.
Stanley dreamed that the boar cut off his head, and I
laughed at him and refused to flee. Three times today my
horse stumbled, and he bucked when he looked upon the
Tower--as if reluctant to carry me to the slaughterhouse.
Oh, now I need that priest I spoke to earlier! And now I
regret boasting to the pursuivant that my enemies were
being butchered at Pomfret while I was safe and secure. Oh,
Margaret, Margaret, now your heavy curse has fallen on
poor Hastings' wretched head!

RATCLIFFE

Come, come, that's enough. The duke wants to eat his
dinner. Make a quick confession. He's eager to see your
head.

HASTINGS

Oh, why do we spend so much time hunting for the
temporary approval of mortal men, instead of seeking
God's favor? Anyone who builds his hopes on the airy
foundation of mankind's approval must live like a drunken
sailor on the ship's mast--ready with every nod of his head
to tumble down into the fatal ocean.

LOVELL

Come on, that's enough. It's useless to make speeches.

HASTINGS

105 O bloody Richard! Miserable England,
I prophesy the fearful'st time to thee
That ever wretched age hath looked upon.—
Come, lead me to the block. Bear him my head.
They smile at me that shortly shall be dead.

Exeunt

HASTINGS

Oh, bloody Richard! Miserable England, I predict that the most frightening time you've ever seen is coming.

[To LOVELL and RATCLIFFE] Come, lead me to the execution block. Bring him my head. Those who smile at me will soon be dead.

They all exit.

Act 3, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM, in rotten armor, marvelous ill-favored

RICHARD

Come, cousin, canst thou quake and change thy color,
Murder thy breath in the middle of a word,
And then begin again, and stop again,
As if thou wert distraught and mad with terror?

BUCKINGHAM

5 Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
Speak, and look back, and pry on every side,
Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
Intending deep suspicion. Ghastly looks
Are at my service, like enforced smiles,
10 And both are ready in their offices,
At any time to grace my stratagems.
But what, is Catesby gone?

RICHARD

He is; and see, he brings the mayor along.

Enter the LORD MAYOR and CATESBY

BUCKINGHAM

Lord Mayor—

RICHARD

15 Look to the drawbridge there!

BUCKINGHAM

Hark, a drum!

RICHARD

Catesby, o'erlook the walls.

Exit CATESBY

BUCKINGHAM

Lord Mayor, the reason we have sent—

RICHARD

Look back! Defend thee! Here are enemies.

BUCKINGHAM

20 God and our innocence defend and guard us!

Enter LOVELL and RATCLIFFE, with HASTINGS' head

RICHARD

Be patient. They are friends, Ratcliffe and Lovell.

Shakescleare Translation

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM enter, wearing rusty, ugly armor.

RICHARD

Come, cousin, can you shake and turn pale, and stop speaking suddenly, and then begin again, and then stop again—as if you were driven crazy from terror?

BUCKINGHAM

Of course, I can imitate the best of tragic actors. I can speak, and then look back, and search all around me, trembling, and jump at the least movement as if I were paranoid. Frightened looks and forced smiles are both at my service, ready to perform their functions whenever I need them. But what, has Catesby gone?

RICHARD

He has. But see, here he comes with the mayor.

The LORD MAYOR and CATESBY enter.

BUCKINGHAM

Lord Mayor—

RICHARD

Look out, the drawbridge!

BUCKINGHAM

Listen, a drum!

RICHARD

Catesby, look out over the walls for us.

CATESBY exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Lord Mayor, the reason we sent—

RICHARD

Look behind you! Defend yourself! There are enemies here.

BUCKINGHAM

May God and our own innocence defend us!

LOVELL and RATCLIFFE enter with HASTINGS' head.

RICHARD

Calm yourself. These are friends—Ratcliffe and Lovell.

LOVELL

Here is the head of that ignoble traitor,
The dangerous and unsuspected Hastings.

RICHARD

So dear I loved the man that I must weep.
25 I took him for the plainest harmless creature
That breathed upon this earth a Christian;
Made him my book, wherein my soul recorded
The history of all her secret thoughts.
So smooth he daubed his vice with show of virtue
30 That, his apparent open guilt omitted—
I mean his conversation with Shore's wife—
He lived from all attainder of suspects.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, well, he was the covert'st sheltered traitor That
ever lived.
35 *[to the MAYOR]* Would you imagine, or almost believe,
Were 't not that by great preservation
We live to tell it, that subtle traitor
This day had plotted, in the council house
To murder me and my good Lord of Gloucester?

LORD MAYOR

40 Had he done so?

RICHARD

What, think you we are Turks or infidels?
Or that we would, against the form of law,
Proceed thus rashly in the villain's death,
But that the extreme peril of the case,
45 The peace of England and our persons' safety
Enforced us to this execution?

LORD MAYOR

Now fair befall you! He deserved his death,
And your good Graces both have well proceeded
To warn false traitors from the like attempts.
50 I never looked for better at his hands
After he once fell in with Mrs Shore.

RICHARD

Yet had we not determined he should die
Until your Lordship came to see his end
(Which now the loving haste of these our friends,
55 Something against our meaning, have prevented),
Because, my lord, I would have had you heard
The traitor speak, and timorously confess
The manner and the purpose of his treasons,
That you might well have signified the same
60 Unto the citizens, who haply may
Misconstrue us in him, and wail his death.

LORD MAYOR

But, my good lord, your Graces' words shall serve
As well as I had seen and heard him speak;
And do not doubt, right noble princes both,
65 But I'll acquaint our duteous citizens
With all your just proceedings in this case.

RICHARD

And to that end we wished your Lordship here
T' avoid the censures of the carping world.

BUCKINGHAM

Which since you come too late of our intent,
70 Yet witness what you hear we did intend.
And so, my good Lord Mayor, we bid farewell.

Exit LORD MAYOR

LOVELL

Here is the head of that wicked traitor, the dangerous and
unsuspected Hastings

RICHARD

I loved the man so dearly that I must weep. I took him to be
the most honest, harmless Christian that ever walked the
earth. I made him like my diary, and trusted him with all my
soul's most secret thoughts. He covered his wickedness
with a virtuous facade so well that, if his guilt hadn't
become apparent—I mean his affair with Shore's wife—I
never would have suspected him.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, well, he was the most secretive, hidden traitor that
ever lived. Can you imagine, Lord Mayor—if we hadn't been
lucky enough to stop him--that sneaky traitor was plotting
to murder me and the Lord of Gloucester in the council
room today?

LORD MAYOR

Is that true?

RICHARD

What, do you think we're heathens or savages? You think
that we would have broken the law and executed this villain
unless it was a case of extreme danger, with England's
peace and our own lives at stake?

LORD MAYOR

May only good things happen to you from now on! He
deserved to die, and your Graces did well in making an
example of him and discouraging other false traitors from
attempting similar plots. I never expected anything better
from him once he got involved with Mrs. Shore.

RICHARD

Yes, but we had decided that he shouldn't die until you,
Lord Mayor, were able to come and witness his execution.
But this was prevented by the loving haste of our friends,
Lovell and Ratcliffe, who went slightly against our
intentions by executing him so soon. My lord, if you could
have heard the traitor speak--and fearfully confess his plots
of treason--then you could have told the citizens what you
heard. However, as it is now, they're likely to
misunderstand our methods of dealing with Hastings, and
mourn his death.

LORD MAYOR

But, my good lord, your Graces' words are just as
trustworthy as if I had seen him and heard him myself. And
don't worry, you noble princes. I'll tell our citizens about
how fairly you dealt with this case.

RICHARD

That is why we wanted you here, your Lordship—to avoid
the condemnation of the critical public.

BUCKINGHAM

But since you came too late to see the execution as we
intended, at least bear witness to our good intentions. And
so, my good Lord Mayor, we bid you farewell.

The LORD MAYOR exits.

RICHARD

Go, after, after, cousin Buckingham.
The mayor towards Guildhall hies him in all post.
There, at your meetest vantage of the time,
75 Infer the bastardy of Edward's children.
Tell them how Edward put to death a citizen
Only for saying he would make his son
Heir to the Crown—meaning indeed his house,
Which, by the sign thereof, was termèd so.
80 Moreover, urge his hateful luxury
And bestial appetite in change of lust,
Which stretched to their servants, daughters, wives,
Even where his raging eye or savage heart,
Without control, lusted to make his prey.
85 Nay, for a need, thus far come near my person:
Tell them when that my mother went with child
Of that insatiate Edward, noble York
My princely father then had wars in France,
And, by true computation of the time,
90 Found that the issue was not his begot,
Which well appearèd in his lineaments,
Being nothing like the noble duke my father.
Yet touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off,
Because, my lord, you know my mother lives.

BUCKINGHAM

95 Doubt not, my lord. I'll play the orator
As if the golden fee for which I plead
Were for myself. And so, my lord, adieu.

RICHARD

If you thrive well, bring them to Baynard's Castle,
Where you shall find me well accompanied
100 With reverend fathers and well-learnèd bishops.

BUCKINGHAM

I go; and towards three or four o'clock
Look for the news that the Guildhall affords.

Exit

RICHARD

Go, Lovell, with all speed to Doctor Shaw.
[*to RATCLIFFE*] Go thou to Friar Penker. Bid them both
105 Meet me within this hour at Baynard's Castle.

Exit LOVELL and RATCLIFFE

Now will I go to take some privy order
To draw the brats of Clarence out of sight,
And to give order that no manner of person
Have any time recourse unto the princes.

Exit

RICHARD

Go after him, cousin Buckingham. He's riding quickly to the town hall. There, at the most advantageous moment, bring up the possibility that King Edward's children are illegitimate. Tell the public how Edward executed a citizen just for saying that he would make his son "heir to the crown"—when he was only talking about the tavern he owned, "The Crown." And then bring up Edward's hateful lust and his insatiable appetite for women, which stretched even to the citizens' servants, daughters, and wives—anyone that his lustful eye and savage heart wanted to prey on. If you need to, you can even bring *me* up: tell them that when my mother became pregnant with that insatiable Edward, my noble father York was away fighting wars in France. If you calculate the time of Edward's birth, and consider the fact that he looks nothing like my father, then it's clear that he's not my father's true son. But only vaguely touch on that subject. For, as you know, my lord, my mother is still alive.

BUCKINGHAM

Don't worry, my lord. I'll speak as persuasively as if I were trying to win the throne for myself. And so farewell, my lord.

RICHARD

If things go well, bring the citizens to my estate at Baynard's Castle. There you'll find me accompanied by priests and bishops.

BUCKINGHAM

I'll go now. At around three or four o'clock you should expect the news from the town hall.

He exits.

RICHARD

Lovell, go as quickly as you can to the Mayor's brother, Doctor Shaw.

[*To RATCLIFFE*] And you go to Friar Penker. Tell them both to meet me within the hour at Baynard's Castle.

LOVELL and RATCLIFFE exit.

Now I'll go and make some secret arrangement to keep Clarence's brats out of sight. And I'll give orders that no one is to see King Edward's sons.

He exits.

Act 3, Scene 6

Shakespeare

Enter a SCRIVENER, with paper


SCRIVENER

This is the indictment of the good Lord Hastings,
Which in a set hand fairly is engrossed,
That it may be today read o'er in Paul's.
And mark how well the sequel hangs together:

5

Shakescleare Translation

A SCRIVENER  enters with a paper.

 *Scriveners were professional scribes.*

SCRIVENER

This here is the indictment of the good Lord Hastings. It's been written neatly in a formal, legal hand, so that it can be read aloud today in Saint Paul's Cathedral. But see how well the sequence of events holds together: last night, Catesby

Eleven hours I have spent to write it over,
 For yesternight by Catesby was it sent me;
 The precedent was full as long a-doing,
 And yet within these five hours Hastings lived,
 Untainted, unexamined, free, at liberty.
 10 Here's a good world the while. Who is so gross
 That cannot see this palpable device?
 Yet who so bold but says he sees it not?
 Bad is the world, and all will come to naught
 When such ill dealing must be seen in thought.

Exit

brought me the indictment, and it took me eleven hours to copy it all out. The original indictment must have taken just as long to write. And yet, five hours, earlier Lord Hastings was alive, innocent, free, and at liberty. What a world we live in now! Who is so stupid that he can't see this obvious trickery? And yet who is bold enough to speak out against it? It's a bad world. And it'll come to a bad end, when such wickedness can't be spoken of.

He exits.

Act 3, Scene 7

Shakespeare

Enter RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM, at several doors

RICHARD

How now, how now? What say the citizens?

BUCKINGHAM

Now, by the holy mother of our Lord,
 The citizens are mum, say not a word.

RICHARD

Touched you the bastardy of Edward's children?

BUCKINGHAM

5 I did, with his contract with Lady Lucy
 And his contract by deputy in France;
 Th' unsatiate greediness of his desire
 And his enforcement of the city wives;
 His tyranny for trifles; his own bastardy,
 10 As being got, your father then in France,
 His resemblance being not like the duke.
 Withal, I did infer your lineaments,
 Being the right idea of your father,
 Both in your form and nobleness of mind;
 15 Laid open all your victories in Scotland,
 Your discipline in war, wisdom in peace,
 Your bounty, virtue, fair humility;
 Indeed, left nothing fitting for your purpose
 Untouched or slightly handled in discourse.
 20 And when mine oratory grew toward end,
 I bid them that did love their country's good
 Cry "God save Richard, England's royal king!"

RICHARD

And did they so?

BUCKINGHAM

No. So God help me, they spake not a word
 25 But, like dumb statues or breathing stones,
 Stared each on other and looked deadly pale;
 Which when I saw, I reprehended them
 And asked the mayor what meant this willful silence.
 His answer was, the people were not used
 30 To be spoke to but by the recorder.
 Then he was urged to tell my tale again:
 "Thus saith the duke. Thus hath the duke inferred"—
 But nothing spoke in warrant from himself.
 When he had done, some followers of mine own,
 35 At the lower end of the hall, hurled up their caps,
 And some ten voices cried "God save King Richard!"
 And thus I took the vantage of those few.
 "Thanks, gentle citizens and friends," quoth I.
 "This general applause and cheerful shout

40

Shakescleare Translation

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM enter from different sides of the stage.

RICHARD

Tell me, tell me, what did the citizens say?

BUCKINGHAM

I swear by the holy mother of our Lord—the citizens didn't say a word.

RICHARD

Did you mention that Edward's children are bastards?

BUCKINGHAM

I did. I brought up his earlier engagements—to Lady Lucy, who bore him a child, and Lady Bona in France. And I described the insatiable greediness of his lust, and his rape of citizens' wives. I reminded them of his harsh punishments for trivial offenses, and said that he was nothing like the duke your father, as the duke was away in France when Edward was conceived. Then I brought up your own appearance and suggested that you were the spitting image of your father, both in your looks and in your noble mind. I described all your victories in Scotland, your discipline in battle, your wisdom in peacetime, your generosity, your virtue, and your noble humility. Indeed, I didn't leave out anything that might have helped your case at all. And then when my speech came to an end, I asked those who loved their country to cry, "God save Richard, England's royal king!"

RICHARD

And did they do it?

BUCKINGHAM

No. So help me God, they didn't say a word, but just sat there like silent statues or breathing stones. They looked at each other and turned deadly pale, and when I saw this, I scolded them and asked the mayor what they meant by this stubborn silence. The mayor said that the citizens weren't used to being spoken to except by the town's official recorder. So I made the recorder repeat my tale. Everything was "the duke said this" and "the duke means that," and he added nothing of his own opinion. When he was done, some of my own followers at the end of the hall threw their caps in the air, and ten or so voices cried, "God save King Richard!" So I pounced on that feeble opportunity and said, "Thank you, noble citizens and friends. This public applause and joyful shouting clearly shows your wisdom and your love for Richard." And then I broke off my speech, and came straight here.

Argues your wisdoms and your love to Richard"—
And even here brake off, and came away.

RICHARD

What tongueless blocks were they! Would not they speak?
Will not the mayor then and his brethren come?

BUCKINGHAM

The Mayor is here at hand. Intend some fear;
45 Be not you spoke with but by mighty suit.
And look you get a prayer book in your hand
And stand between two churchmen, good my lord,
For on that ground I'll make a holy descent .
And be not easily won to our requests.
50 Play the maid's part: still answer "nay," and take it.

RICHARD

I go. An if you plead as well for them
As I can say "nay" to thee for myself,
No doubt we bring it to a happy issue.

Knocking within

BUCKINGHAM

Go, go, up to the leads. The Lord Mayor knocks.

Exit RICHARD

Enter the LORD MAYOR and CITIZENS

55 Welcome, my lord. I dance attendance here.
I think the duke will not be spoke withal.

Enter CATESBY

Now, Catesby, what says your lord to my request?

CATESBY

He doth entreat your Grace, my noble lord,
To visit him tomorrow or next day.
60 He is within, with two right reverend fathers,
Divinely bent to meditation,
And in no worldly suits would he be moved
To draw him from his holy exercise.

BUCKINGHAM

Return, good Catesby, to the gracious duke.
65 Tell him myself, the mayor, and aldermen,
No less importing than our general good,
In deep designs, and matters of great moment
Are come to have some conference with his grace.

CATESBY

I'll signify so much unto him straight.

Exit

BUCKINGHAM

70 Ah, ha, my lord, this prince is not an Edward!
He is not lolling on a lewd love bed,
But on his knees at meditation;
Not dallying with a brace of courtesans,
But meditating with two deep divines;
75 Not sleeping, to engross his idle body,
But praying, to enrich his watchful soul.
Happy were England would this virtuous prince
Take on his grave the sovereignty thereof.
But sure I fear we shall not win him to it.

LORD MAYOR

80 Marry, God defend his grace should say us nay!

RICHARD

What tongueless blockheads! Why wouldn't they speak?
Will the mayor and his fellow citizens not come here?

BUCKINGHAM

The mayor is on his way and nearly here. Pretend to be
afraid, and don't let yourself be spoken to until we plead
with you. And get a prayer book in your hand and stand
between two priests, my good lord. I'll use that to improvise
an argument for your holiness. But don't be easily won over
by our requests to be king. Be like a coy virgin: refuse for a
long time, and then finally accept.

RICHARD

I'm going now. If you're as good at pleading on their behalf
as I am at saying "no" to you, then there's no doubt this will
end well.

Sounds of knocking come from offstage.

BUCKINGHAM

Go, go, up to the roof. The Lord Mayor knocks.

RICHARD exits.

The LORD MAYOR and CITIZENS enter.

Welcome, my lord. I'm just entertaining myself and waiting
for an audience with the duke. I don't think he wants to be
spoken to.

CATESBY enters.

Now, Catesby, what does your lord say to my request?

CATESBY

My noble lord, he asks your Grace to please visit him
tomorrow or the next day. He is inside with two priests,
deep in prayer. He doesn't want to be disturbed from his
holy labors by any worldly business.

BUCKINGHAM

Return, good Catesby, to the gracious duke. Tell him that I,
the mayor, and some citizens have come to confer with his
Grace about matters of great importance, which concern
the good of all.

CATESBY

I'll tell him that right away.

He exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Aha, my lord, this prince is not an Edward! He's not lolling
about in a lustful bed, but on his knees in prayer; not
enjoying himself with a few prostitutes, but praying with
two learned priests; not sleeping to fatten up his lazy body,
but praying to enrich his attentive soul. England would be
blessed to have this virtuous prince wearing its crown. But
I'm afraid he won't agree to it.

LORD MAYOR

Indeed, God forbid that he should say no to us!

BUCKINGHAM

I fear he will. Here Catesby comes again.

Enter CATESBY

Now, Catesby, what says his grace?

CATESBY

He wonders to what end you have assembled
Such troops of citizens to come to him,
85 His grace not being warned thereof before.
He fears, my lord, you mean no good to him.

BUCKINGHAM

Sorry I am my noble cousin should
Suspect me that I mean no good to him.
By heaven, we come to him in perfect love,
90 And so once more return and tell his grace.

Exit CATESBY

When holy and devout religious men
Are at their beads, 'tis much to draw them thence,
So sweet is zealous contemplation.

Enter RICHARD aloft, between two bishops CATESBY returns

LORD MAYOR

See where his Grace stands, 'tween two clergymen.

BUCKINGHAM

95 Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
To stay him from the fall of vanity;
And, see, a book of prayer in his hand,
True ornaments to know a holy man.—
Famous Plantagenet, most gracious prince,
100 Lend favorable ears to our requests,
And pardon us the interruption
Of thy devotion and right Christian zeal.

RICHARD

My lord, there needs no such apology.
I do beseech your Grace pardon me,
105 Who, earnest in the service of my God,
Deferred the visitation of my friends.
But, leaving this, what is your Grace's pleasure?

BUCKINGHAM

Even that, I hope, which pleaseth God above
And all good men of this ungoverned isle.

RICHARD

110 I do suspect I have done some offense
That seems disgracious in the city's eye,
And that you come to reprehend my ignorance.

BUCKINGHAM

You have, my lord. Would it might please your Grace,
On our entreaties, to amend your fault.

RICHARD

115 Else wherefore breathe I in a Christian land?

BUCKINGHAM

Know, then, it is your fault that you resign
The supreme seat, the throne majestical,
The sceptered office of your ancestors,
Your state of fortune, and your due of birth,
120 The lineal glory of your royal house,
To the corruption of a blemished stock,
Whiles in the mildness of your sleepy thoughts,

BUCKINGHAM

I fear that he will. Here comes Catesby again.

CATESBY enters.

Now, Catesby, what does his Grace say?

CATESBY

He wonders why you have assembled such a large group of
citizens to come to him without warning him beforehand.
He fears that you mean him harm, my lord.

BUCKINGHAM

I'm sorry that my noble cousin should suspect that I wish
him harm. By heaven, we are here because we love him. Go
back and tell him.

CATESBY exits.

When holy and devout religious men are praying, it takes a
great deal to draw them away, because they are so wrapped
up in their eager contemplation of God.

*RICHARD enters overhead, in between two bishops.
CATESBY returns.*

LORD MAYOR

See where his Grace is standing—between two clergymen.

BUCKINGHAM

They are like two virtuous supports for a Christian prince, to
prevent him from the downfall of vanity. And see, he has a
prayer book in his hand. These are the accessories of a holy
man.

*[To RICHARD] Most gracious prince, famous Plantagenet,
hear our requests and pardon us for interrupting your
prayer and proper Christian devotion.*

RICHARD

My lord, there's no need for such an apology. I ask your
Grace to pardon me instead. I've been so focused on
serving God that I kept my friends waiting. But aside from
this, what is it you want?

BUCKINGHAM

Only that which will, I hope, please God above, and all good
men of this ungoverned island.

RICHARD

I suspect that I've committed some offense that the citizens
disapprove of, and you've come to reprimand me for my
ignorance.

BUCKINGHAM

You have, my lord. If it would please your Grace, you should
listen to our request and make up for your offense.

RICHARD

Why else would I live in a Christian country, if I can't be
forgiven for my faults?

BUCKINGHAM

Know, then, that it is your fault that you've given up the
supreme seat, the majestic throne, the powerful office of
your ancestors, your position of greatness, and the glory of
your royal family—all of which are yours by birth. And
instead you've handed it over to a corrupted, impure
usurper. You have been lost in prayer and dreamy
contemplation, but now we've come to alert you of your

Which here we waken to our country's good,
 The noble isle doth want her proper limbs—
 125 Her face defaced with scars of infamy,
 Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants,
 And almost shouldered in the swallowing gulf
 Of dark forgetfulness and deep oblivion;
 Which to recure, we heartily solicit
 130 Your gracious self to take on you the charge
 And kingly government of this your land,
 Not as Protector, steward, substitute,
 Or lowly factor for another's gain,
 But as successively, from blood to blood,
 135 Your right of birth, your empery, your own.
 For this, consorted with the citizens,
 Your very worshipful and loving friends,
 And by their vehement instigation,
 In this just suit come I to move your Grace.

RICHARD

140 I cannot tell if to depart in silence
 Or bitterly to speak in your reproof
 Best fitteth my degree or your condition.
 If not to answer, you might haply think
 Tongue-tied ambition, not replying, yielded
 145 To bear the golden yoke of sovereignty,
 Which fondly you would here impose on me.
 If to reprove you for this suit of yours,
 So seasoned with your faithful love to me,
 Then on the other side I checked my friends.
 150 Therefore, to speak, and to avoid the first,
 And then, in speaking, not to incur the last,
 Definitely thus I answer you:
 Your love deserves my thanks, but my desert
 Unmeritable shuns your high request.
 155 First, if all obstacles were cut away
 And that my path were even to the crown
 As the ripe revenue and due of birth,
 Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
 So mighty and so many my defects,
 160 That I would rather hide me from my greatness,
 Being a bark to brook no mighty sea,
 Than in my greatness covet to be hid
 And in the vapor of my glory smothered.
 But, God be thanked, there is no need of me,
 165 And much I need to help you, were there need.
 The royal tree hath left us royal fruit,
 Which, mellowed by the stealing hours of time,
 Will well become the seat of majesty,
 And make, no doubt, us happy by his reign.
 170 On him I lay what you would lay on me,
 The right and fortune of his happy stars,
 Which God defend that I should wring from him.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, this argues conscience in your Grace,
 But the respects thereof are nice and trivial,
 175 All circumstances well considered.
 You say that Edward is your brother's son;
 So say we too, but not by Edward's wife.
 For first was he contract to Lady Lucy—
 Your mother lives a witness to that vow—
 180 And afterward by substitute betrothed
 To Bona, sister to the king of France.
 These both put off, a poor petitioner,
 A care-crazed mother to a many sons,
 A beauty-waning and distressed widow,
 185 Even in the afternoon of her best days,
 Made prize and purchase of his wanton eye,
 Seduced the pitch and height of his degree
 To base declension and loathed bigamy.
 By her in his unlawful bed he got
 190 This Edward, whom our manners term "the Prince."
 More bitterly could I expostulate,
 Save that, for reverence to some alive,
 I give a sparing limit to my tongue.
 Then, good my lord, take to your royal self
 195

country's needs. Our noble island wants her true self
 back—her face has been scarred by Edward's infamous
 deeds, and her royal family has been corrupted by ignoble
 outsiders. Its majesty is almost lost in an abyss of dark
 forgetfulness and deep oblivion. To fix this situation, we
 beg your Grace to take charge and become king of this land—
 not Lord Protector, steward, substitute, or lowly agent to
 another ruler, but king, the successor of a noble bloodline.
 This is your right by birth, your empire, your own. It's for
 this purpose that I have come with these citizens—who are
 your devoted and loving friends, and vehemently begged
 me to do this—to try and convince your Grace to accept our
 plea.

RICHARD

I can't decide if I should leave in silence or bitterly scold
 you. I don't know which response is more appropriate to
 my rank and your social position. If I say nothing, you might
 think that my silence means consent, and you'll assume
 that I agree to bear the golden burden of responsibility that
 you're foolishly trying to impose on me. But if I scold you
 for this request just after you've proven your faithful love for
 me, then I would be guilty of rebuking my friends. Therefore
 I will speak, and so avoid the first possibility, but with my
 words I will avoid the second. So this is my answer, once
 and for all: I thank you for your love, but I don't deserve to
 be king. So I must turn down your noble request. Even if all
 obstacles were removed and my path led straight to the
 crown—my proper birthright—my poverty of spirit and my
 many other flaws would still make me prefer to hide from
 my greatness, rather than be swallowed up by it and be
 smothered in glory. I am only a small boat, unprepared for
 the stormy sea of kingship. But, thank God, there is no need
 for me to rule. The royal tree has left us royal fruit, which,
 with time, will fit the throne well, and make us all happy as
 our king. I lay on him the responsibility you want to lay on
 me, as it is his birthright and his happy destiny. God forbid
 that I should steal the crown from him.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, your response shows that you have a strong
 conscience, but your objections are trivial, especially
 considering the circumstances. You say that Prince Edward
 is your brother's son. We agree, but not by your brother's
 wife. King Edward was first engaged to Lady Lucy—and your
 mother lives as a witness to this—and after that he was
 betrothed to Lady Bona, the King of France's sister-in-law.
 But when both these engagements failed, Elizabeth Grey—a
 harried mother of many sons, a poor widow losing her
 former beauty, a woman past her prime—took advantage of
 his lust and seduced him away from his role of majesty. She
 led him to drop his standards and commit adultery with
 her. With him she conceived this illegitimate Edward, whom
 we now politely call "the Prince." I could describe even
 worse things, too, but I'll restrain myself out of respect for
 some who are still alive. Therefore, my good lord, even if
 you don't want to bless us and the land with your rule, then
 at least accept this offered crown to rescue your noble
 family from its current corruption. Return the line of
 hereditary kingship to a true, straight course.

This proffered benefit of dignity,
If not to bless us and the land withal,
Yet to draw forth your noble ancestry
From the corruption of abusing times
Unto a lineal, true-derived course.

LORD MAYOR

200 Do, good my lord. Your citizens entreat you.

BUCKINGHAM

Refuse not, mighty lord, this proffered love.

CATESBY

O, make them joyful. Grant their lawful suit.

RICHARD

Alas, why would you heap this care on me?
I am unfit for state and majesty.
205 I do beseech you, take it not amiss;
I cannot, nor I will not, yield to you.

BUCKINGHAM

If you refuse it, as in love and zeal
Loath to depose the child, your brother's son—
As well we know your tenderness of heart
210 And gentle, kind, effeminate remorse,
Which we have noted in you to your kindred
And equally indeed to all estates—
Yet know whe'er you accept our suit or no,
Your brother's son shall never reign our king,
215 But we will plant some other in the throne,
To the disgrace and downfall of your house.
And in this resolution here we leave you.—
Come, citizens. Zounds, I'll entreat no more.

RICHARD

O, do not swear, my lord of Buckingham!

Exit BUCKINGHAM and some others

CATESBY

220 Call them again, sweet prince. Accept their suit.
If you deny them, all the land will rue it.

RICHARD

Will you enforce me to a world of cares?
Call them again. I am not made of stones,
But penetrable to your kind entreaties,
225 Albeit against my conscience and my soul.

Enter BUCKINGHAM and the rest

Cousin of Buckingham and sage, grave men,
Since you will buckle fortune on my back,
To bear her burden, whe'er I will or no,
I must have patience to endure the load;
230 But if black scandal or foul-faced reproach
Attend the sequel of your imposition,
Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
From all the impure blots and stains thereof,
For God doth know, and you may partly see,
235 How far I am from the desire of this.

LORD MAYOR

God bless your Grace! We see it and will say it.

RICHARD

In saying so, you shall but say the truth.

LORD MAYOR

Do accept, my lord. Your citizens beg you.

BUCKINGHAM

Don't refuse this love we offer you, mighty lord.

CATESBY

Oh, make them joyful. Grant their request!

RICHARD

Alas, why would you heap this responsibility on me? I am
unfit for power and majesty. Don't take this the wrong way,
but I cannot and will not give in to you.

BUCKINGHAM

If you're refusing this out of love and family honor, because
you're reluctant to depose the child, your brother's son—we
all know how tender your heart is. We know what gentle,
kind, and tearful feelings you have for your relatives, and
indeed for people of any rank and status. But know this:
whether or not you accept our request, your brother's son
will never be our king. We'll find someone else to take the
throne, to the disgrace and downfall of your family. And
with this we leave you.

[To CITIZENS] Come, citizens. By God, I'll beg no more!

RICHARD

Oh, do not swear, my lord of Buckingham!

*BUCKINGHAM starts to exit with the LORD MAYOR and
CITIZENS.*

CATESBY

Call them back, sweet prince. Accept their request. If you
deny them, the whole country will regret it.

RICHARD

Would you force me into a world of worries? Call them back
then. I am not made of stone. I can be persuaded by these
kind pleas, even though it goes against my conscience and
my soul.

BUCKINGHAM and the rest return.

Cousin Buckingham and you wise, solemn men, since you
intend to force the crown onto my head--to bear its burden
whether I want to or not--then I must have the patience to
endure the load. But if any foul scandal or ugly criticism
comes of this, the mere fact that you forced me to accept
must clear me from any future blame. For God knows, and
you can see, how reluctant I am to accept this
responsibility.

LORD MAYOR

God bless your Grace! We will bear witness to the fact that
you didn't want the crown.

RICHARD

And in saying so, you'll only be telling the truth.

BUCKINGHAM

Then I salute you with this royal title:
Long live Richard, England's worthy king!

ALL

240 Amen.

BUCKINGHAM

Tomorrow will it please you to be crowned?

RICHARD

Even when you please, since you will have it so.

BUCKINGHAM

Tomorrow, then, we will attend your Grace,
And so most joyfully we take our leave.

RICHARD

245 *[To the bishops]* Come, let us to our holy task again.—
Farewell, my cousin. Farewell, gentle friends.

Exeunt

BUCKINGHAM

Then I salute you with this royal title: Long live Richard,
England's worthy king!

ALL

Amen.

BUCKINGHAM

Will you let yourself be crowned tomorrow?

RICHARD

Whenever you want, since you will insist on it.

BUCKINGHAM

Tomorrow, then. We will wait on your Grace. And now we
joyfully bid you farewell.

RICHARD

[To the bishops] Come, let us return to our holy labors.
[To BUCKINGHAM and CITIZENS] Farewell, my cousin.
Farewell, noble friends.

They all exit.

Act 4, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, DUCHESS of York, and DORSET at one door;
ANNE, duchess of Gloucester with CLARENCE's young daughter at
another door*

DUCHESS

Who meets us here? My niece Plantagenet
Led in the hand of her kind aunt of Gloucester?
Now, for my life, she's wandering to the Tower,
On pure heart's love, to greet the tender prince.—
5 Daughter, well met.

ANNE

God give your Graces both
A happy and a joyful time of day.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

As much to you, good sister. Whither away?

ANNE

10 No farther than the Tower, and, as I guess,
Upon the like devotion as yourselves,
To gratulate the gentle princes there.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Kind sister, thanks. We'll enter all together.

Enter BRAKENBURY

And in good time here the lieutenant comes.—
Master Lieutenant, pray you, by your leave,
15 How doth the prince and my young son of York?

BRAKENBURY

Right well, dear madam. By your patience,
I may not suffer you to visit them.
The king hath strictly charged the contrary.

Shakesclare Translation

*QUEEN ELIZABETH, the DUCHESS of York, and DORSET
enter from one side of the stage. ANNE, Duchess of
Gloucester, enters from the other side, leading CLARENCE's
young daughter, Margaret Plantagenet.*

DUCHESS

Who is this? My granddaughter Plantagenet, led by the
hand of her kind aunt, the Duchess of Gloucester? Now, I
swear, she's heading to the Tower to greet the young prince,
whom she loves so purely.

[To ANNE] Nice to see you, daughter-in-law.

ANNE

May God grant both of you a nice day.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And you too, good sister-in-law. Where are you off to?

ANNE

Just to the Tower. And I can guess that I'm going for the
same reason you are: to greet the gentle princes who are
staying there.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Kind sister-in-law, thanks. We'll all go together.

BRAKENBURY enters.

And here comes the lieutenant, right on time.

[To BRAKENBURY] Master Lieutenant, please tell us, how
are the prince and my young son of York?

BRAKENBURY

They are well, dear madam. But if you'll pardon me, I'm not
allowed to let you visit them. The king has strictly forbidden
it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The king? Who's that?

BRAKENBURY

20 I mean, the Lord Protector.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The Lord protect him from that kingly title!
Hath he set bounds between their love and me?
I am their mother. Who shall bar me from them?

DUCHESS

I am their father's mother. I will see them.

ANNE

25 Their aunt I am in law, in love their mother.
Then bring me to their sights. I'll bear thy blame
And take thy office from thee, on my peril.

BRAKENBURY

No, madam, no. I may not leave it so.
I am bound by oath, and therefore pardon me.

Exit

Enter Lord STANLEY, earl of Derby

STANLEY

30 Let me but meet you ladies one hour hence,
And I'll salute your Grace of York as mother
And reverend looker-on, of two fair queens.
[to ANNE]
Come, madam, you must straight to Westminster,
35 There to be crownèd Richard's royal queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, cut my lace asunder that my pent heart
May have some scope to beat, or else I swoon
With this dead-killing news!

ANNE

Despiteful tidings! O, unpleasing news!

DORSET

40 *[to QUEEN ELIZABETH]* Be of good cheer, mother. How
fares
your Grace?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

O Dorset, speak not to me. Get thee gone.
Death and destruction dogs thee at thy heels.
45 Thy mother's name is ominous to children.
If thou wilt outstrip death, go, cross the seas,
And live with Richmond, from the reach of hell.
Go, hie thee, hie thee from this slaughterhouse,
Lest thou increase the number of the dead
50 And make me die the thrall of Margaret's curse,
Nor mother, wife, nor England's counted queen.

STANLEY

Full of wise care is this your counsel, madam.
[to DORSET] Take all the swift advantage of the hours.
You shall have letters from me to my son
55 In your behalf, to meet you on the way.
Be not ta'en tardy by unwise delay.

DUCHESS

O ill-dispersing wind of misery!
O my accursèd womb, the bed of death!
A cockatrice hast thou hatched to the world,
60 Whose unavoided eye is murderous.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The king? Who's that?

BRAKENBURY

I mean the Lord Protector.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And may the Lord protect the crown from him! Is he trying
to set up barriers between my children and me? I am their
mother. Who will forbid me from seeing them?

DUCHESS

I am their father's mother. I will see them.

ANNE

I am their aunt by marriage, but I love them like a mother.
Bring me to see them. I'll take your office upon myself,
Lieutenant--and take all the blame as well.

BRAKENBURY

No, madam, no. I cannot do that. I am bound by oath, so
you must forgive me.

He exits.

Lord STANLEY, Earl of Derby, enters.

STANLEY

If I were greeting you ladies again in just an hour, I would be
saluting you, Duchess of York, as the mother of two fair
queens.

[To ANNE] Come, madam, you must go to Westminster
Abbey right away, where you'll be crowned Richard's royal
queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, cut my dress open so that my constrained heart can
have some room to beat, or else I'll faint from this deadly
news!


ANNE

Cruel tidings! Oh, unhappy news!

DORSET

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] Cheer up, mother. How are you
feeling?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh Dorset, don't speak to me. Leave immediately. Death
and destruction are snapping at your heels. Your mother's
name has become a bad omen. If you want to outrun death,
then go. Cross the seas to France, and live with Richmond ,
out of the reach of hell. Go, run away. Run away from
this slaughterhouse, before you end up a body increasing
the number of the dead, and make me die the slave of
Margaret's curse—neither wife, nor mother, nor England's
queen.


STANLEY

Madam, your advice is full of wisdom and caring.

[To DORSET] Make full use of the time. I'll write a letter to
my stepson Richmond on your behalf, so he'll meet you on
the way. But don't be caught delaying.

DUCHESS

Oh, this wind of misery, scattering misfortunes everywhere!
Oh, my accursed womb, the bed of death! It has unleashed
a basilisk onto the world, a monster whose very look is
murderous!

 Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, was living in exile in France. He would later succeed Richard to become King Henry VII, beginning the reign of the Tudors, who ruled during Shakespeare's time.

STANLEY

[to ANNE] Come, madam, come. I in all haste was sent.

ANNE

And I in all unwillingness will go.
O, would to God that the inclusive verge
Of golden metal that must round my brow
65 Were red-hot steel to sear me to the brains!
Anointed let me be with deadly venom,
And die ere men can say, "God save the Queen."

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Go, go, poor soul, I envy not thy glory.
To feed my humor, wish thyself no harm.

ANNE

70 No? Why? When he that is my husband now
Came to me, as I followed Henry's corse,
When scarce the blood was well washed from his hands
Which issued from my other angel husband
And that dear saint which then I weeping followed—
75 O, when, I say, I looked on Richard's face,
This was my wish: be thou, quoth I, accursed
For making me, so young, so old a widow;
And, when thou wedd'st, let sorrow haunt thy bed;
And be thy wife, if any be so mad,
80 More miserable by the life of thee
Than thou hast made me by my dear lord's death.
Lo, ere I can repeat this curse again,
Within so small a time my woman's heart
Grossly grew captive to his honey words
85 And proved the subject of mine own soul's curse,
Which hitherto hath held my eyes from rest,
For never yet one hour in his bed
Did I enjoyed the golden dew of sleep,
But with his timorous dreams was still awaked.
90 Besides, he hates me for my father Warwick,
And will, no doubt, shortly be rid of me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Poor heart, adieu. I pity thy complaining.

ANNE

No more than from my soul I mourn for yours.

DORSET

Farewell, thou woeful welcomer of glory.

ANNE

95 Adieu, poor soul that tak'st thy leave of it.

DUCHESS

[to DORSET]

Go thou to Richmond, and good fortune guide thee.

[to ANNE] Go thou to Richard, and good angels tend thee.

100 [to QUEEN ELIZABETH]

Go thou to sanctuary, and good thoughts possess thee.
I to my grave, where peace and rest lie with me.
Eighty-odd years of sorrow have I seen,
And each hour's joy wracked with a week of teen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

105 Stay, yet look back with me unto the Tower.—
Pity, you ancient stones, those tender babes
Whom envy hath immured within your walls—
Rough cradle for such little pretty ones.
Rude ragged nurse, old sullen playfellow
110 For tender princes, use my babies well.
So foolish sorrows bids your stones farewell.

Exeunt

STANLEY

[To ANNE] Come, madam, come. I was sent in a great hurry.

ANNE

And with great unwillingness I'll go. Oh, I wish to God that
the golden crown I must wear would turn to red-hot steel,
and burn my skull to the brains! Let me be anointed with
deadly venom instead of holy oil, so I can die before anyone
manages to say, "God save the Queen!"

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Go, go, poor soul. I don't envy your new throne. But make
me happy by not wishing harm on yourself.

ANNE

No? Why not? Richard—who is now my husband—first came
to me when he'd hardly washed all the blood off his hands
from killing both my first, angelic husband and my
husband's father—that dear saint Henry—whose corpse I
was tearfully following. Oh, I tell you, when I looked at
Richard's face then, my only wish was this: "May you be
cursed for making me a widow so young. When you get
married, let sorrow haunt your bed, and may your wife—if
any woman is crazy enough to marry you—be made more
miserable by your life than you've made me by my dear
husband's death." But alas! Before I could even repeat my
curse again, my woman's heart stupidly fell prey to his
honeyed words. I then proved the victim of my own soul's
curse. From then on, I haven't had one hour of precious
sleep in his bed without being awakened by the sounds of
his nightmares. It doesn't matter, though—Richard hates
me because of my father, Warwick, who was his enemy.
He'll soon get rid of me, no doubt.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Poor heart, farewell. I pity your troubles.

ANNE

No more than I mourn for yours, from the depths of my
soul.

DORSET

Farewell, you sad new queen.

ANNE

[To ELIZABETH] And farewell to you, sad old queen.

DUCHESS

[To DORSET] You go to Richmond, and may good fortune go
with you.

[To ANNE] You go to Richard, and may guardian angels
protect you.

[To QUEEN ELIZABETH] And you go to sanctuary, and keep
up your spirits. I will go to my grave, where peace and rest
can lie alongside me. I've seen eighty-odd years of sorrow.
Every hour of joy has been destroyed by a week of grief.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Wait, and look back at the Tower with me. You ancient
stones of the Tower, have pity on those tender children who
are locked inside your walls because of envy. You are a
rough cradle for such little pretty ones. You rude, ragged
nurse; you old, sullen playmate for tender princes—treat my
babies well. And so I bid your stones farewell, you Tower,
with all my foolish sorrow.

They all exit.

Act 4, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Sound a sennet. Enter RICHARD in pomp; BUCKINGHAM, CATESBY, RATCLIFFE, LOVELL, a page, and others

RICHARD

Stand all apart. —Cousin of Buckingham.

Others move aside

BUCKINGHAM

My gracious sovereign.

RICHARD

Give me thy hand.

Here he ascendeth the throne. Sound trumpets

Thus high, by thy advice

5 And thy assistance is King Richard seated.
But shall we wear these glories for a day,
Or shall they last and we rejoice in them?

BUCKINGHAM

Still live they, and forever let them last.

RICHARD

Ah, Buckingham, now do I play the touch,
10 To try if thou be current gold indeed.
Young Edward lives; think now what I would speak.

BUCKINGHAM

Say on, my loving lord.

RICHARD

Why, Buckingham, I say I would be king,

BUCKINGHAM

Why so you are, my thrice-renownèd lord.

RICHARD

15 Ha! Am I king? 'Tis so—but Edward lives.

BUCKINGHAM

True, noble prince.

RICHARD

O bitter consequence
That Edward still should live "true noble prince!"
Cousin, thou wast not wont to be so dull.
20 Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,
And I would have it suddenly performed.
What sayest thou now? Speak suddenly. Be brief.

BUCKINGHAM

Your Grace may do your pleasure.

RICHARD

Tut, tut, thou art all ice; thy kindness freezes.
25 Say, have I thy consent that they shall die?

BUCKINGHAM

Give me some little breath, some pause, dear lord,
Before I positively speak in this.
I will resolve you herein presently.

Shakescleare Translation

Trumpets sound. Richard enters, crowned and in royal clothes. BUCKINGHAM, CATESBY, RATCLIFFE, LOVELL, a PAGE, and others follow.

RICHARD

Everyone stand aside.

[To BUCKINGHAM] Cousin Buckingham.

The others move aside.

BUCKINGHAM

My gracious sovereign.

RICHARD

Give me your hand.

RICHARD ascends the throne. Trumpets sound.

I now have this high seat as King Richard because of your advice and assistance. But will I have these glories for a day only, or will they last long enough for me to enjoy them?

BUCKINGHAM

May they live on forever.

RICHARD

Ah, Buckingham, now I must test you to see if you're true gold indeed. Young Prince Edward is alive. Think about what I might say next.

BUCKINGHAM

Go on, my loving lord.

RICHARD

Why, Buckingham, I said I wanted to be king.

BUCKINGHAM

Why, you are king, my glorious lord.

RICHARD

Ha! Am I king? Perhaps it's so—but Edward still lives.

BUCKINGHAM

True, noble prince.

RICHARD

Oh, what a bitter conclusion that Edward should still live as the "true, noble prince!" Cousin, you didn't use to be so stupid. Shall I speak plainly? I want the bastards dead, and I want it done immediately. What do you say now? Speak quickly, and be brief.

BUCKINGHAM

Your Grace can do as he pleases.

RICHARD

Tut, tut, you've grown icy. Your kindness freezes over. Tell me, do you agree that they must die?

BUCKINGHAM

Give me a moment to breathe, dear lord, a pause before I make a statement. I'll give you my answer shortly.

*Exit***CATESBY***[aside to the other attendants]*

30 The king is angry. See, he gnaws his lip.

RICHARD*[aside]* I will converse with iron-witted fools
And unrespective boys. None are for me
That look into me with considerate eyes.
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.—

35 Boy!

PAGE*[coming forward]* My lord?**RICHARD**Know'st thou not any whom corrupting gold
Will tempt unto a close exploit of death?**PAGE**40 I know a discontented gentleman
Whose humble means match not his haughty spirit.
Gold were as good as twenty orators,
And will, no doubt, tempt him to anything.**RICHARD**

What is his name?

PAGE

His name, my lord, is Tyrrel.

RICHARD

45 I partly know the man. Go, call him hither, boy

*Exit PAGE**[aside]* The deep-revolving witty Buckingham
No more shall be the neighbor to my counsels
Hath he so long held out with me, untired,
And stops he now for breath? Well, be it so.*Enter STANLEY*

50 How now, Lord Stanley, what's the news?

STANLEYKnow, my loving lord,
The marquess Dorset, as I hear, is fled
To Richmond, in the parts where he abides.*He walks aside***RICHARD**55 Come hither, Catesby. Rumor it abroad
That Anne my wife is very grievous sick.
I will take order for her keeping close.
Enquire me out some mean poor gentleman,
Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter.
The boy is foolish, and I fear not him.
60 Look how thou dream'st! I say again, give out
That Anne my queen is sick and like to die.
About it, for it stands me much upon
To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me.*Exit CATESBY*65 *[aside]* I must be married to my brother's daughter,
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.
Murder her brothers, and then marry her—
Uncertain way of gain. But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin.*He exits.***CATESBY***[To the attendants so that only they can hear]* The king is
angry. See how he bites his lip.**RICHARD***[To himself]* I only want to deal with unfeeling fools and
careless boys. I want nothing to do with anyone who can
read me well. Ambitious Buckingham is growing too
thoughtful.*[To the PAGE]* Boy!**PAGE***[Coming forward]* My lord?**RICHARD**Do you know anyone who can be tempted with gold into
secretly killing someone?**PAGE**I know one unhappy gentleman whose empty wallet
doesn't match his proud spirit. Gold is better than twenty
speeches, and will, no doubt, tempt him to do anything.**RICHARD**

What is his name?

PAGE

His name is Tyrrel, my lord.


RICHARD

I know the man a little. Go, call him here, boy.

*The PAGE exits.**[To himself]* The deep-thinking, clever Buckingham will no
longer be privy to my plots. Has he run with me for so long,
only to stop for a "moment to breathe" now? Well, so be it.*STANLEY enters.*

Hello, Lord Stanley, what's the news?

STANLEYYou should know, my loving lord: I've heard that the
Marquess of Dorset has fled to Richmond in France.*STANLEY steps aside.***RICHARD**Come here, Catesby. Spread around a rumor that my wife
Anne is very sick. I will make arrangements for keeping her
locked up. And find me some poor gentleman whom I can
marry straight away to Clarence's daughter. Clarence's son
is an idiot, so I'm not afraid of him. But look at you
daydreaming! I say again: spread the rumor that Anne, my
queen, is sick and likely to die. Hurry up—it's a strange way
important that I destroy anything that might come to
damage me.*CATESBY exits.**[To himself]* I must marry my brother Edward's daughter
, or else my kingdom is only standing on fragile glass.
Murder her brothers, and then marry her—it's a strange way
to go about things. But I'm so steeped in blood at this point

 Richard is referring to Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward and Queen Elizabeth. She would go on to marry Richmond (Henry Tudor), thereby

Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye.

Enter PAGE with TYRREL

70 Is thy name Tyrrel?

TYRREL

James Tyrrel, and your most obedient subject.

RICHARD

Art thou indeed?

TYRREL

Prove me, my gracious lord.

RICHARD

Dar'st thou resolve to kill a friend of mine?

TYRREL

75 Please you. But I had rather kill two enemies.

RICHARD

Why then, thou hast it. Two deep enemies,
Foes to my rest, and my sweet sleep's disturbers,
Are they that I would have thee deal upon.
Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower.

TYRREL

80 Let me have open means to come to them,
And soon I'll rid you from the fear of them.

RICHARD

Thou sing'st sweet music. Hark, come hither, Tyrrel.

TYRREL approaches RICHARD and kneels

Go, by this token. Rise, and lend thine ear.

He whispers

85 There is no more but so. Say it is done,
And I will love thee and prefer thee for it.

TYRREL

I will dispatch it straight.

Exit

Enter BUCKINGHAM

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I have considered in my mind
The late request that you did sound me in.

RICHARD

Well, let that rest. Dorset is fled to Richmond.

BUCKINGHAM

90 I hear the news, my lord.

RICHARD

Stanley, he is your wife's son. Well, look unto it.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I claim the gift, my due by promise,
For which your honor and your faith is pawned—
Th' earldom of Hereford and the movables

95 Which you promised I shall possess.

that one sin must follow another. These eyes of mine have
no tears of pity.

*uniting York and Lancaster and
beginning the reign of the Tudors.*

The PAGE enters with TYRREL.

Is your name Tyrrel?

TYRREL

James Tyrrel, your most obedient subject.

RICHARD

Are you indeed?

TYRREL

Let me prove it, my gracious lord.

RICHARD

Would you dare to kill a friend of mine?

TYRREL

If it would please you. But I would rather kill two enemies.

RICHARD

Well, you can do that then. I want you to kill two great
enemies of mine, enemies of my sleep and my peace of
mind. Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower.

TYRREL

Let me have free access to reach them, and soon you won't
have to fear them anymore.

RICHARD

Your words are sweet music. Come here, Tyrrel.

TYRREL approaches RICHARD and kneels.

Go, with this password. Rise and listen.

RICHARD whispers to TYRREL.

There's nothing more than that. When you tell me the deed
is done, I will love you and promote you for it.

TYRREL

I'll do it straight away.

He exits.

BUCKINGHAM enters.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I've been considering the request you just asked
me about.


RICHARD


Well, forget about that. Dorset has fled to join Richmond.

BUCKINGHAM

I heard that news, my lord.

RICHARD

Stanley, Richmond is your wife's son . Well, find out what
she knows.

 Lord Stanley was the fourth
husband of Margaret, the Countess of
Richmond, and the Earl of Richmond's
stepfather.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I want to claim the gift you promised me on your
honor and faith—the earldom of Hereford and all the
possessions that go with it, which you swore that I would
have.

RICHARD

Stanley, look to your wife. If she convey
Letters to Richmond, you shall answer it.

BUCKINGHAM

What says your Highness to my just request?

RICHARD

I do remember me, Henry the Sixth
100 Did prophesy that Richmond should be king,
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
A king, perhaps—

BUCKINGHAM

My lord—

RICHARD

How chance the prophet could not at that time
105 Have told me, I being by, that I should kill him?

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, your promise for the earldom—

RICHARD

Richmond? When last I was at Exeter,
The mayor in courtesy showed me the castle
And called it Rougemont, at which name I started,
110 Because a bard of Ireland told me once
I should not live long after I saw Richmond.

BUCKINGHAM

My Lord—

RICHARD

Ay, what's o'clock?

BUCKINGHAM

I am thus bold to put your Grace in mind
115 Of what you promised me.

RICHARD

Well, but what's o'clock?

BUCKINGHAM

Upon the stroke of ten.

RICHARD

Well, let it strike.

BUCKINGHAM

Why let it strike?

RICHARD

Because that, like a jack, thou keep'st the stroke
120 Betwixt thy begging and my meditation.
I am not in the giving vein today.

BUCKINGHAM

Why then, resolve me whether you will or no.

RICHARD

Thou troublest me; I am not in the vein.

Exeunt all but BUCKINGHAM

BUCKINGHAM

125 And is it thus? Repays he my deep service
With such deep contempt? Made I him king for this?
O, let me think on Hastings and be gone
To Brecknock, while my fearful head is on!

RICHARD

Stanley, watch your wife. If she sends any letters to
Richmond, you will answer for it.

BUCKINGHAM

What does your Highness say to my just request?

RICHARD

I remember that Henry the Sixth prophesied that Richmond
would be king one day, when Richmond was only a foolish
boy. A king, perhaps—

BUCKINGHAM

My lord—

RICHARD

But why wasn't the prophet ³ able to foresee that I, who
was there at the time, would kill *him*?

³ Richard refers to Henry VI here.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, your promise of the earldom—

RICHARD

Richmond? The last time I was in Exeter, the mayor politely
showed me a castle and called it "Rougemont." ⁴ The
name startled me, for an Irish poet once told me that I
wouldn't live long after seeing Richmond.

⁴ "Rougemont" and "Richmond" both mean "red hill."

BUCKINGHAM

My lord—

RICHARD

Hey, what time is it?

BUCKINGHAM

I am reminding your Grace of what you promised me.

RICHARD

Well, but what time is it?

BUCKINGHAM

Almost ten o'clock.

RICHARD

Well, let it strike ten then.

BUCKINGHAM

Why "let it strike?"

RICHARD

Because you're like the peasant who strikes the bell,
interrupting my thoughts with your begging. I'm not in the
giving mood today.

BUCKINGHAM

Well then, give me a final answer of whether I'll have the
earldom or not.

RICHARD

You're annoying me. I'm not in the mood.

Everyone exits except for BUCKINGHAM.

BUCKINGHAM

Is this how it is? He rewards my great service with such
great contempt? Did I make him king for this? Oh, let me
learn from Hastings and hurry away to Brecknock ⁵, while
my frightened head is still on my shoulders!

⁵ The Duke of Buckingham lived in Brecknock Castle in Wales.

*Exit**He exits.*

Act 4, Scene 3

Shakespeare

*Enter TYRREL***TYRREL**

The tyrannous and bloody act is done,
 The most arch deed of piteous massacre
 That ever yet this land was guilty of.
 Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
 5 To do this piece of ruthless butchery,
 Albeit they were fleshed villains, bloody dogs,
 Melted with tenderness and mild compassion,
 Wept like two children in their deaths' sad story.
 "O thus" quoth Dighton, "lay those gentle babes."
 10 "Thus, thus," quoth Forrest, "girdling one another
 Within their alabaster innocent arms.
 Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
 And in their summer beauty kissed each other.
 A book of prayers on their pillow lay,
 15 Which once," quoth Forrest, "almost changed my mind,
 But O, the devil—"There the villain stopped;
 When Dighton thus told on: "We smotherèd
 The most replenishèd sweet work of nature
 That from the prime creation e'er she framed."
 20 Hence both are gone with conscience and remorse;
 They could not speak; and so I left them both
 To bear this tidings to the bloody king.

Enter RICHARD

And here he comes.—All health, my sovereign lord.

RICHARD

Kind Tyrrel, am I happy in thy news?

TYRREL

25 If to have done the thing you gave in charge
 Beget your happiness, be happy then,
 For it is done.

RICHARD

But did'st thou see them dead?

TYRREL

I did, my lord.

RICHARD

30 And buried, gentle Tyrrel?

TYRREL

The chaplain of the Tower hath buried them,
 But where, to say the truth, I do not know.

RICHARD

Come to me, Tyrrel, soon at after-supper,
 When thou shalt tell the process of their death.
 35 Meantime, but think how I may do thee good,
 And be inheritor of thy desire.
 Farewell till then.

TYRREL

I humbly take my leave.

Shakesclore Translation

*TYRREL enters.***TYRREL**

The tyrannous and bloody act is done. It was the worst, most horrible massacre of which this land has ever been guilty. Dighton and Forrest--whom I hired to do this piece of ruthless butchery--are experienced villains. They are like bloody hunting dogs. But even they melted with tenderness and compassion, and wept like children when they told the sad story of what they'd done. "The gentle children lay like this," Dighton said. "Like this," said Forrest, "embracing each other with their white innocent arms. Their lips were touching, like four red roses on a stalk. And a prayer book lay on their pillow," said Forrest, "which almost made me change my mind. But oh, the devil—" And there the villain stopped talking, and Dighton continued the tale: "We smothered the most perfect, sweet work that nature ever created." Both men were crushed with remorse, so that they couldn't speak any more. I left them both to bring this news to the bloody king.

RICHARD enters.

And here he comes.

[To RICHARD] All health to you, my sovereign lord.

RICHARD

Kind Tyrrel, will your news make me happy?

TYRREL

If the completion of your task will make you happy, be happy then. For it is done.

RICHARD

But did you see them dead?

TYRREL

I did, my lord.

RICHARD

And buried, gentle Tyrrel?

TYRREL

The chaplain of the Tower has buried them. But to tell you the truth, I don't know where.

RICHARD

Tyrrel, come back to me soon after dessert, and tell me the details of their deaths. In the meantime, think about how I can reward you with whatever you desire. Farewell until then.

TYRREL

I humbly leave you.

*Exit TYRREL***RICHARD**

The son of Clarence have I pent up close,
 40 His daughter meanly have I matched in marriage,
 The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom,
 And Anne my wife hath bid this world goodnight.
 Now, for I know the Breton Richmond aims
 At young Elizabeth, my brother's daughter,
 45 And by that knot looks proudly on the crown,
 To her go I, a jolly thriving wooer.

*Enter RATCLIFFE***RATCLIFFE**

My lord!

RICHARD

Good or bad news, that thou com'st in so bluntly?

RATCLIFFE

Bad news, my lord. Morton is fled to Richmond,
 And Buckingham, backed with the hardy Welshmen,
 50 Is in the field, and still his power increaseth.

RICHARD

Ely with Richmond troubles me more near
 Than Buckingham and his rash-levied strength.
 Come, I have learned that fearful commenting
 Is leaden servitor to dull delay;
 55 Delay leads impotent and snail-paced beggary;
 Then fiery expedition be my wing,
 Jove's Mercury, and herald for a king.
 Go, muster men. My counsel is my shield.
 60 We must be brief when traitors brave the field.

*Exeunt**TYRREL exits.***RICHARD**

I have Clarence's son locked up, and Clarence's daughter
 married off to a poor fellow. Edward's sons are sleeping in
 heaven, and my wife Anne has bid this world goodnight.
 But I know that Richmond aims to marry young Elizabeth--
 my brother Edward's daughter--and win the crown through
 that match. So now I go to her: a jolly, lively wooer.

*RATCLIFFE enters.***RATCLIFFE**

My lord!


RICHARD


Is it good news or bad news, that you come bursting in here?

RATCLIFFE

Bad news, my lord. The Bishop of Ely has fled to Richmond.
 And Buckingham, backed by his army of hardy Welshmen,
 is on the march, his power still growing.

RICHARD

Ely joining Richmond troubles me more than Buckingham
 and his hastily raised army. Come, I have learned that
 frightened talk only leads to delay, and delay leads to slow
 ruin. Fiery speed will be my course of action. I will be
 Jupiter , with wing-footed Mercury as my messenger. Go,
 rally men to fight. My sword will be my advisor. We must act
 quickly when traitors march to war.

 Jupiter was the king of the ancient Roman gods. Mercury was the messenger god with winged sandals.

They exit.

Act 4, Scene 4

Shakespeare

*Enter old QUEEN MARGARET***QUEEN MARGARET**

So now prosperity begins to mellow
 And drop into the rotten mouth of death.
 Here in these confines slyly have I lurked
 To watch the waning of mine enemies.
 5 A dire induction am I witness to,
 And will to France, hoping the consequence
 Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical.
 Withdraw thee, wretched Margaret. Who comes here?

*She steps aside**Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH and the DUCHESS of York***QUEEN ELIZABETH**

Ah, my poor princes! Ah, my tender babes,
 10 My unblown flowers, new-appearing sweets,
 If yet your gentle souls fly in the air
 And be not fixed in doom perpetual,
 Hover about me with your airy wings
 And hear your mother's lamentation.

Shakescleare Translation

*Old QUEEN MARGARET enters.***QUEEN MARGARET**

So now the Yorks' prosperity has ripened and rotted, falling
 into the mouth of death. I've been lurking in the shadows
 here to watch my enemies come to ruin, and it's a terrible
 scene I've witnessed—an ominous prologue to what I hope
 will be a bitter, dark, and tragic conclusion. I'll head to
 France. But hide now, wretched Margaret. Who's coming?

*She steps aside.**QUEEN ELIZABETH and the DUCHESS of York enter.***QUEEN ELIZABETH**

Ah, my poor princes! Ah, my tender babes--my flowers who
 didn't have a chance to bloom! If your gentle souls are still
 flying about in the air and haven't yet landed in their final
 resting place, then hover about me now with your airy
 wings, and hear your mother's cries of mourning.

QUEEN MARGARET

15 *[aside]* Hover about her; say that right for right
Hath dimmed your infant morn to aged night.

DUCHESS

So many miseries have crazed my voice
That my woe-wearied tongue is still and mute.
Edward Plantagenet, why art thou dead?

QUEEN MARGARET

20 *[aside]* Plantagenet doth quit Plantagenet;
Edward for Edward pays a dying debt.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs
And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?

QUEEN MARGARET

25 *[aside]* When holy Harry died, and my sweet son.

DUCHESS

[sitting down]

Dead life, blind sight, poor mortal living ghost,
Woe's scene, world's shame, grave's due by life
usurped,

30 Brief abstract and record of tedious days,
Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,
Unlawfully made drunk with innocent blood.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

[sitting down beside her]

35 Ah, that thou wouldst as soon afford a grave
As thou canst yield a melancholy seat,
Then would I hide my bones, not rest them here.
O, who hath any cause to mourn but we?

QUEEN MARGARET

[joining them] If ancient sorrow be most reverend,
Give mine the benefit of seignior,

40 And let my griefs frown on the upper hand.
If sorrow can admit society,
Tell o'er your woes again by viewing mine.
I had an Edward till a Richard killed him;
I had a husband till a Richard killed him.

45 Thou hadst an Edward till a Richard killed him;
Thou hadst a Richard till a Richard killed him.

DUCHESS

I had a Richard too, and thou did'st kill him;
I had a Rutland too; thou holp'st to kill him.

QUEEN MARGARET

Thou hadst a Clarence too, and Richard killed him

50 Then forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death—
That dog, that had his teeth before his eyes,
To worry lambs and lap their gentle blood;
That excellent grand tyrant of the earth,

55 That reigns in galled eyes of weeping souls;
That foul defacer of God's handiwork
Thy womb let loose to chase us to our graves.
O upright, just, and true-disposing God,
How do I thank thee that this carnal cur

60 Preys on the issue of his mother's body
And makes her pew-fellow with others' moan!


QUEEN MARGARET


[To herself] Hover about her, spirits, and say that she got
what she deserved, since you were also killed before your
time.

DUCHESS

So many miseries have cracked my voice that my tongue is
weary of wailing and has gone silent. Edward Plantagenet,
why are you dead?

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] One Plantagenet makes up for another. Edward
dies to pay the debt for another Edward's  death.

 Here, Queen Margaret refers to
the death of her son, Edward--heir to
Henry VI.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh God, will you abandon such gentle lambs, and throw
them to the wolf? How could you sleep when such a deed
was done?

QUEEN MARGARET

[To herself] God slept when my holy husband Henry died,
and my sweet son Edward.

DUCHESS

[Sitting down] My life has died. My sight has gone blind. I'm
like a ghost that's still alive. I am the bearer of misfortune;
the shame of the world; a soul that rightfully belongs to the
grave. As a summary and brief record of my unbearable life,
I will rest my restless bones on England's lawful earth,
which is now covered with innocent blood, against the laws
of man and nature.


QUEEN ELIZABETH


[Sitting down beside her] Ah, if only the earth could provide
me with a grave instead of just a sad seat, then I would bury
my bones, instead of simply resting them here. Oh, who has
any right to mourn except for us?

QUEEN MARGARET

[Joining them and sitting] If the oldest sorrow is the most
revered, then give mine the privilege of seniority, and let my
grief have the upper hand. If you can accept company in
your sadness, then consider your losses again by looking at
mine. I had an Edward until a Richard killed him. And I had
a husband, Henry, until a Richard killed him. You had an
Edward until a Richard killed him, and you had a Richard,
young York, until a Richard killed him.

DUCHESS

I had a Richard  too, my husband, and you killed him. I
had a Rutland too, and you helped to kill him.

 The Duchess of York refers to her
husband Richard Plantagenet, father
to King Edward IV, Richard, and the
murdered Edmund, Earl of Rutland.

QUEEN MARGARET

You had a Clarence too, and Richard killed him. The kennel
of your womb has let loose a hellhound that hunts us all to
death—a dog that had teeth before it had eyes. His teeth
attack lambs and lap up their gentle blood. He is the
greatest tyrant of the earth, and thrives among the tears of
those he has injured. That foul creature who defaces God's
handiwork came forth from *your* womb to chase us to our
graves. Oh, upright, just, and generous God, how can I
thank you enough that this deadly mutt preys on his
mother's offspring and makes her a companion to others'
sorrow?

DUCHESS

O Harry's wife, triumph not in my woes!
God witness with me, I have wept for thine.

QUEEN MARGARET

Bear with me, I am hungry for revenge,
65 And now I cloy me with beholding it.
Thy Edward he is dead, that killed my Edward,
Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward;
Young York, he is but boot, because both they
Matched not the high perfection of my loss.
70 Thy Clarence he is dead that stabbed my Edward,
And the beholders of this frantic play,
Th' adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,
Untimely smothered in their dusky graves.
Richard yet lives, hell's black intelligencer,
75 Only reserved their factor to buy souls
And send them thither. But at hand, at hand
Ensues his piteous and unpitied end.
Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,
To have him suddenly conveyed from hence.
80 Cancel his bond of life, dear God I pray,
That I may live to say, "The dog is dead."

QUEEN ELIZABETH

O, thou didst prophesy the time would come
That I should wish for thee to help me curse
That bottled spider, that foul bunch-backed toad!

QUEEN MARGARET

85 I called thee then "vain flourish of my fortune."
I called thee then poor shadow, "painted queen,"
The presentation of but what I was,
The flattering index of a direful pageant,
One heaved a-high, to be hurled down below,
90 A mother only mocked with two fair babes,
A dream of what thou wast, a garish flag
To be the aim of every dangerous shot,
A sign of dignity, a breath, a bubble,
A queen in jest, only to fill the scene.
95 Where is thy husband now? Where be thy brothers?
Where are thy two sons? Wherein dost thou joy?
Who sues and kneels and says "God save the queen?"
Where be the bending peers that flattered thee?
Where be the thronging troops that followed thee?
100 Decline all this, and see what now thou art:
For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
For queen, a very caitiff crowned with care;
For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
105 For she that scorned at me, now scorned of me;
For she being feared of all, now fearing one;
For she commanding all, obeyed of none.
Thus hath the course of justice whirled about
And left thee but a very prey to time,
110 Having no more but thought of what thou wast
To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
Thou didst usurp my place, and dost thou not
Usurp the just proportion of my sorrow?
Now thy proud neck bears half my burdened yoke,
115 From which even here I slip my weary head
And leave the burthen of it all on thee.
Farewell, York's wife, and queen of sad mischance.
These English woes will make me smile in France.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

O, thou well-skilled in curses, stay awhile,
120 And teach me how to curse mine enemies.

QUEEN MARGARET

Forbear to sleep the nights, and fast the days;
Compare dead happiness with living woe;
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were,
And he that slew them fouler than he is.
125 Bettering thy loss makes the bad causer worse.

DUCHESS

Oh, Henry's wife, do not triumph in my woes! As God is my witness, I have wept for yours.

QUEEN MARGARET

Bear with me. I am hungry for revenge, and now I'm almost sick from gorging myself upon it. Your son Edward—who killed my son Edward—is dead. Your grandson Edward is also dead, with young York thrown in as an extra, because both your grandsons didn't equal my lost son. Your Clarence—who stabbed my son Edward—is dead. And the audience to this frantic play—the adulterer Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey—have all been smothered in early graves. Richard still lives as hell's dark spy, only allowed to remain long enough to buy souls and send them down below. But soon, soon his pitiful and well-deserved end will come. The earth gapes open, hell burns, devils roar, and saints pray that he might be quickly sent from this earth. Dear God, end his life soon, so that I may live to say, "The dog is dead!"

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, you once did prophesy that the time would come when I would want your help in cursing that swollen spider, that foul hunchbacked toad!

QUEEN MARGARET

And then I called you a "poor imitation of a queen" and a "meaningless decoration on my throne"—the image of what I was in reality—the pretty prologue to an ominous tragedy; a woman lifted high only to be hurled down below; a mother mocked with the gifts of two dear babies, only to lose them. You were a shadow of a queen; a gaudy banner that enemies could target; an empty symbol of dignity; a breath; a bubble; a mockery of a queen; a stand-in only there to fill the role. And where is your husband now? Where are your brothers? Where are your two sons? Where do you find your joy? Who kneels before you and makes requests and says, "God save the queen?" Where are the bowing noblemen who flattered you? Where are the crowds that followed you? Without all this, see what you are: instead of a happy wife, a grieving widow; instead of a joyful mother, a woman who wails over her children; instead of a queen, a poor wretch crowned only with worries; instead of one granting favors, one humbly begging for favors. She who mocked me is now mocked by me, and she who commanded everyone is now obeyed by no one. See how the wheel of justice has turned, leaving you the victim of time. All you have left are the memories of your former glory, which torture you even more when you consider what you've become. You usurped my position, and now see how you usurp my sorrow. Your proud neck bears half of my heavy burden, but now let me give it all to you. Farewell, York's wife, queen of sad misfortune. These English woes will make me smile in France.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, you who are so skilled in curses, stay a while and teach me how to curse my enemies.

QUEEN MARGARET

Don't sleep at night, and don't eat during the day. Compare lost happiness with current suffering. Remember your children as being sweeter than they were, and think of the one that killed them as fouler than he is. Magnifying your

Revolving this will teach thee how to curse.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My words are dull. O, quicken them with thine!

QUEEN MARGARET

Thy woes will make them sharp and pierce like mine.

Exit

DUCHESS

Why should calamity be full of words?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

130 Windy attorneys to their clients' woes,
Airy succeeders of intestate joys,
Poor breathing orators of miseries,
Let them have scope, though what they will impart
Help nothing else, yet do they ease the heart.

DUCHESS

135 If so, then be not tongue-tied. Go with me,
And in the breath of bitter words let's smother
My damnèd son that thy two sweet sons smothered.

A trumpet sounds

The trumpet sounds. Be copious in exclams.

They rise

Enter King RICHARD and his train, including CATESBY

RICHARD

Who intercepts my expedition?

DUCHESS

140 O, she that might have intercepted thee,
By strangling thee in her accursèd womb,
From all the slaughters, wretch, that thou hast done.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

145 Hid'st thou that forehead with a golden crown
Where should be branded, if that right were right,
The slaughter of the prince that owed that crown
And the dire death of my poor sons and brothers?
Tell me, thou villain-slave, where are my children?

DUCHESS

Thou toad, thou toad, where is thy brother Clarence?
And little Ned Plantagenet his son?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

150 Where is gentle Rivers, Vaughan, Grey?

DUCHESS

Where is kind Hastings?

RICHARD

A flourish, trumpets! Strike alarum, drums!
Let not the heavens hear these telltale women
Rail on the Lord's anointed. Strike, I say!

Flourish. Alarums

155 Either be patient and entreat me fair,
Or with the clamorous report of war

grief makes the person who caused it even worse. Doing all this will teach you how to curse.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My words are dull. Oh, give them life with yours!

QUEEN MARGARET

Your suffering will make them sharp, so they can pierce like mine.

She exits.

DUCHESS

Why should this catastrophe be accompanied by so many words?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Words are useless breath, like lawyers pleading on their sad clients' behalf; like the children of joys who inherit nothing; like poor speech-makers going on about misery. Even so, let them have a chance. Though they won't help in any other way, they still help ease the heart.

DUCHESS

If that's so, then don't be tongue-tied. Come with me, and with our bitter words let's smother my damned son Richard who smothered your two sons.

A trumpet sounds.

The trumpet sounds—he's coming. Don't restrain yourself.

They stand up.

King RICHARD enters with his followers and attendants, including CATESBY.

RICHARD

Who's blocking my path?

DUCHESS

Oh, you wretch! It is she who could have blocked you from all the murders you've committed—by strangling you in her cursed womb.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Are you hiding that forehead with a golden crown, when, if the world was just, it would be branded with the mark of your crimes—the slaughter of the prince who rightfully possessed that crown, and the monstrous deaths of my poor sons and brothers? Tell me, you low-born criminal, where are my children?

DUCHESS

You toad, you toad, where is your brother Clarence? And little Ned Plantagenet, his son.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Where is noble Rivers, and Vaughan, and Grey?

DUCHESS

Where is kind Hastings?

RICHARD

Trumpets, play! Drums, a call to arms! Don't let the heavens hear these tattle-tale women abuse the Lord's anointed king. Play, I say!

Trumpets and drums play military music.

Either be patient and treat me with courtesy or I'll drown you out with the noisy music of war.

Thus will I drown your exclamations.

DUCHESS

Art thou my son?

RICHARD

Ay, I thank God, my father, and yourself.

DUCHESS

160 Then patiently hear my impatience.

RICHARD

Madam, I have a touch of your condition,
Which cannot brook the accent of reproof.

DUCHESS

O, let me speak!

RICHARD

Do then, but I'll not hear.

DUCHESS

165 I will be mild and gentle in my words.

RICHARD

And brief, good mother, for I am in haste.

DUCHESS

Art thou so hasty? I have stayed for thee,
God knows, in torment and in agony.

RICHARD

And came I not at last to comfort you?

DUCHESS

170 No, by the Holy Rood, thou know'st it well.
Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
Thy school days frightful, desp'rate, wild, and
175 furious;
Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody,
More mild, but yet more harmful, kind in hatred.
What comfortable hour canst thou name,
180 That ever graced me in thy company?

RICHARD

Faith, none but Humfrey Hower, that called your Grace
To breakfast once, forth of my company.
If I be so disgracious in your eye,
Let me march on and not offend you, madam.—

185 Strike up the drum.

DUCHESS

I prithee, hear me speak.

RICHARD

You speak too bitterly.

DUCHESS

Hear me a word,
For I shall never speak to thee again.

RICHARD

190 So.

DUCHESS

Either thou wilt die by God's just ordinance
Ere from this war thou turn a conqueror,
Or I with grief and extreme age shall perish
And nevermore behold thy face again.

195

DUCHESS

Are you my son?

RICHARD

Yes, and for that I thank God, my father, and yourself.

DUCHESS

Then patiently listen to my impatience.

RICHARD

Madam, I have some of your temperament, in that I can't
tolerate the language of disapproval.

DUCHESS

Oh, let me speak!

RICHARD

Speak then, but I won't listen.

DUCHESS

I will be mild and gentle in my words.

RICHARD

And be brief too, good mother, for I'm in a hurry.

DUCHESS

Are you so impatient? God knows I waited for you, in
torment and in agony, when I was giving birth to you.


RICHARD

And didn't I come at last to comfort you?

DUCHESS

No, by the Holy Cross, and you know it well. You came to
earth to make the earth my hell. Your birth was a painful
burden to me. You were fussy and willful as a baby. Your
school days were frightening, wild, and angry. As a young
man, you were daring, bold, and adventurous. And in your
maturity you've grown proud, cunning, sly, and
bloody—less wild but more dangerous, flattering in your
hatred. Can you name a comfortable hour I've ever had in
your company?

RICHARD

Well, none but Humphrey Hour , who once invited you to
have breakfast without my company. If I'm so displeasing to
look at, then let me march on and not offend you, madam.

[To attendants] Strike up the drum.

DUCHESS

Please, listen to me speak.

RICHARD

You speak too bitterly.

DUCHESS


Just listen a moment, and then I'll never speak to you
again.

RICHARD

Then do it.

DUCHESS

Either you'll die—as God's just punishment—before you can
return victorious from this war, or else I will die from grief
and old age. At any rate, I'll never see your face again. So
take with you my most terrible curse, and may it weigh you

 This puzzling reference may refer
to an expression "dining with Duke
Humphrey," which meant going
hungry.

Therefore take with thee my most grievous curse,
Which in the day of battle tire thee more
Than all the complete armor that thou wear'st.
My prayers on the adverse party fight,
And there the little souls of Edward's children
200 Whisper the spirits of thine enemies
And promise them success and victory.
Bloody thou art; bloody will be thy end.
Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend.

Exit

QUEEN ELIZABETH

205 Though far more cause, yet much less spirit to curse
Abides in me. I say amen to her.

RICHARD

Stay, madam. I must talk a word with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

210 I have no more sons of the royal blood
For thee to slaughter. For my daughters, Richard,
They shall be praying nuns, not weeping queens,
And therefore level not to hit their lives.

RICHARD

You have a daughter called Elizabeth,
Virtuous and fair, royal and gracious.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

215 And must she die for this? O, let her live,
And I'll corrupt her manners, stain her beauty,
Slander myself as false to Edward's bed,
Throw over her the veil of infamy.
So she may live unscarred of bleeding slaughter,
I will confess she was not Edward's daughter.

RICHARD

Wrong not her birth. She is a royal princess.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

220 To save her life, I'll say she is not so.

RICHARD

Her life is safest only in her birth.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And only in that safety died her brothers.

RICHARD

Lo, at their births good stars were opposite.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

No, to their lives ill friends were contrary.

RICHARD

225 All unavoids is the doom of destiny.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

True, when avoided grace makes destiny.
My babes were destined to a fairer death
If grace had blessed thee with a fairer life.

RICHARD

You speak as if that I had slain my cousins.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

230 Cousins, indeed, and by their uncle cozened
Of comfort, kingdom, kindred, freedom, life.
Whose hand soever launched their tender hearts,
Thy head, all indirectly, gave direction.

down in battle more than your suit of armor. My prayers will
fight on your enemies' side. And the little souls of Edward's
children will encourage your enemies, promising them
success and victory. You have lived in violence, and now
you will die with violence. Your life has been shameful, so
let your death be as well.

She exits.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Though I have far more reason to curse you, I don't have
her energy. I'll just say "amen" to everything she said.

RICHARD

Wait, madam. I must speak with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I have no more sons of royal blood for you to murder. And
as for my daughters, Richard, they'll become praying nuns,
not weeping queens. So don't aim to destroy their lives.

RICHARD

You have a daughter called Elizabeth, who is virtuous and
beautiful, royal and gracious.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And must she die for this? Oh, let her live, and I'll ruin her
manner, mar her beauty, lie and say she is illegitimate, and
destroy her reputation. So that she might escape being
murdered, I'll say that she was not Edward's daughter.

RICHARD

Don't lie about her birth. She is a royal princess.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To save her life, I'll say she isn't.

RICHARD

Her royal birth is what makes her safest.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Her brothers died because of that same "safety."

RICHARD

Alas, at birth they were badly fated.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

No, in their lives they were opposed by bad friends.

RICHARD

No one can avoid the doom of destiny.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That's true, when someone who has avoided God's grace is
controlling that destiny. My children would have been
destined to better deaths if you had been blessed with a
more virtuous life.

RICHARD

You speak as if I had killed my nephews.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Indeed, your nephews were cheated by their uncle of their
comfort, kingdom, relatives, freedom, and life. Some other
hand might have pierced their tender hearts, but you're the
one who gave the order. No doubt the murderous knife was

235 No doubt the murd'rous knife was dull and blunt
Till it was whetted on thy stone-hard heart,
To revel in the entrails of my lambs.
But that still use of grief makes wild grief tame,
My tongue should to thy ears not name my boys
240 Till that my nails were anchored in thine eyes,
And I, in such a desp'rate bay of death,
Like a poor bark of sails and tackling reft,
Rush all to pieces on thy rocky bosom.

RICHARD

Madam, so thrive I in my enterprise
And dangerous success of bloody wars
245 As I intend more good to you and yours
Than ever you or yours were by me harmed!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What good is covered with the face of heaven,
To be discovered, that can do me good?

RICHARD

The advancement of your children, gentle lady.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

250 Up to some scaffold, there to lose their heads.

RICHARD

Unto the dignity and height of fortune,
The high imperial type of this earth's glory.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Flatter my sorrow with report of it.
Tell me what state, what dignity, what honor,
255 Canst thou demise to any child of mine?

RICHARD

Even all I have— ay, and myself and all—
Will I withal endow a child of thine;
So in the Lethe of thy angry soul
Thou drown the sad remembrance of those wrongs
260 Which thou supposest I have done to thee.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Be brief, lest that the process of thy kindness
Last longer telling than thy kindness' date.

RICHARD

Then know that from my soul I love thy daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My daughter's mother thinks it with her soul.

RICHARD

265 What do you think?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That thou dost love my daughter from thy soul.
So from thy soul's love didst thou love her brothers,
And from my heart's love I do thank thee for it.

RICHARD

270 Be not so hasty to confound my meaning.
I mean that with my soul I love thy daughter
And do intend to make her Queen of England.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Well then, who dost thou mean shall be her king?

RICHARD

Even he that makes her queen. Who else should be?

dull and blunt until it was sharpened against your hard
heart of stone, and after that it could rejoice among my
little lambs' bloody innards. But constant talk of grief
makes wild grief tame, so I won't say my boys' names again
until I've anchored my fingernails in your eyes and gouged
them out. I am like a poor boat without sails in a stormy bay
of death, and I'll break myself to pieces against your rocky
heart.

RICHARD

Madam, if I am successful in these dangerous, bloody wars
to which I am marching off, I then intend to do more good
to you and your relatives than I've ever done them harm!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What good is there still undiscovered in this world that can
do me good now?

RICHARD

The advancement of your children, noble lady.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Advancing them up to some scaffold, to lose their heads.


RICHARD


Advancement to the dignity and height of fortune, the most
kingly symbol of this world's glory.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Flatter me in my sorrow then. Tell me what rank, what
dignity, or what honor you could possibly offer to any child
of mine?

RICHARD

Only everything I have—yes, including myself. That's what
I'll give to a child of yours. May [Lethe](#)  drown your sad
memories of the wrongs you imagine I've done to you.

 *Lethe was the river of
forgetfulness in ancient Greek
mythology.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Explain yourself quickly, before this speech about your
kindness outlasts whatever kindness you have.

RICHARD

Then know that from my soul I love your daughter
Elizabeth.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And I believe it with my soul.

RICHARD

What do you believe?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That you love my daughter from your soul—*far* from your
soul. Just like you loved her brothers. And from my heart's
same love I thank you for it.

RICHARD

Don't be so quick to confuse my meaning. I mean that I love
your daughter *with* my soul, and I intend to make her
Queen of England.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Well then, who will be her king?

RICHARD

The same man who makes her queen. Who else should it
be?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What, thou?

RICHARD

275 Even so. How think you of it?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

How canst thou woo her?

RICHARD

That would I learn of you,
As one being best acquainted with her humor.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And wilt thou learn of me?

RICHARD

280 Madam, with all my heart.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Send to her, by the man that slew her brothers,
A pair of bleeding hearts; thereon engrave
"Edward" and "York." Then haply she will weep.
Therefore present to her—as sometime Margaret
285 Did to thy father, steeped in Rutland's blood—
A handkerchief, which say to her did drain
The purple sap from her sweet brother's body,
And bid her wipe her weeping eyes withal.
If this inducement move her not to love,
290 Send her a letter of thy noble deeds;
Tell her thou mad'st away her uncle Clarence,
Her uncle Rivers, ay, and for her sake
Mad'st quick conveyance with her good aunt Anne.

RICHARD

295 You mock me, madam. This is not the way
To win your daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

There is no other way,
Unless thou couldst put on some other shape
And not be Richard, that hath done all this.

RICHARD

Say that I did all this for love of her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

300 Nay, then indeed she cannot choose but hate thee,
Having bought love with such a bloody spoil.

RICHARD

Look what is done cannot be now amended.
Men shall deal unadvisedly sometimes,
Which after-hours give leisure to repent.
305 If I did take the kingdom from your sons,
To make amends I'll give it to your daughter.
If I have killed the issue of your womb,
To quicken your increase I will beget
Mine issue of your blood upon your daughter.
310 A grandam's name is little less in love
Than is the doting title of a mother.
They are as children but one step below,
Even of your metal, of your very blood,
Of all one pain, save for a night of groans
315 Endured of her for whom you bid like sorrow.
Your children were vexation to your youth,
But mine shall be a comfort to your age.
The loss you have is but a son being king,
And by that loss your daughter is made queen.
320 I cannot make you what amends I would;
Therefore accept such kindness as I can.
Dorset your son, that with a fearful soul
Leads discontented steps in foreign soil,

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What, you?

RICHARD

Of course. What did you think?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

How would you go about wooing her?

RICHARD

That's what I want to learn from you, since you know her
temperament best.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And will you learn from me?

RICHARD

Madam, with all my heart.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Then send to her—from the man who killed her brothers—a
pair of bleeding hearts. Write "Edward" and "York" on them.
Then she might weep. So to wipe up her tears, present her
with a handkerchief—like the one Margaret gave to your
father, steeped in his son Rutland's blood—and tell her that
this handkerchief wiped up the blood that drained from her
sweet brother's body. Tell her to wipe her weeping eyes
with it. If all this doesn't convince her to love you, then send
her a letter describing your other noble deeds. Tell her that
you secretly killed her uncle Clarence, her uncle Rivers, yes,
and speedily killed her good aunt Anne for her sake.

RICHARD

You mock me, madam. This is not the way to win your
daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

There is no other way, unless you could change your shape
and be someone other than the Richard who has
committed all these deeds.

RICHARD

Say that I did all those things out of love for her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

No, for then she has no choice but to hate you, as you tried
to buy her love with murder.

RICHARD

Whatever is done cannot be undone. Men make mistakes
sometimes, and then they repent when they have the time.
If I did take the kingdom from your sons, then to make up
for it I'll give it to your daughter. If I've killed your children,
then I'll give them new life by having children with your
daughter. A grandmother is hardly loved less than a mother.
Grandchildren are just one step removed from children,
made of your same substance and your very blood. They
take the same amount of effort, minus that one night of
labor which you suffered for your daughter's sake. Your
children troubled you in your youth, but my children will
comfort you in your old age. Your only real loss is that your
son wasn't king, but through that loss your daughter will
become queen. I can't repay you as much as I'd like to, so
accept what kindness I can offer. Your son Dorset—who fled
in fear and joined the French army against me—would come
quickly home to high promotions and great dignity if this
marriage takes place. The king who calls your beautiful
daughter "wife" will call Dorset "brother." Once again you'll
be the mother to a king, and all the ruins of unhappy times
will be repaired with double their value in contentment.
Why, we can look forward to many good days ahead! The

325 This fair alliance quickly shall call home
 To high promotions and great dignity.
 The king that calls your beautiful daughter wife
 Familiarly shall call thy Dorset brother.
 Again shall you be mother to a king,
 And all the ruins of distressful times
 330 Repaired with double riches of content.
 What, we have many goodly days to see!
 The liquid drops of tears that you have shed
 Shall come again, transformed to orient pearl,
 Advantaging their love with interest
 335 Of ten times double gain of happiness.
 Go then, my mother; to thy daughter go.
 Make bold her bashful years with your experience;
 Prepare her ears to hear a wooer's tale;
 Put in her tender heart th' aspiring flame
 340 Of golden sovereignty; acquaint the Princess
 With the sweet silent hours of marriage joys;
 And when this arm of mine hath chastised
 The petty rebel, dull-brained Buckingham,
 Bound with triumphant garlands will I come
 345 And lead thy daughter to a conqueror's bed,
 To whom I will retail my conquest won,
 And she shall be sole victress, Caesar's Caesar.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What were I best to say? Her father's brother
 Would be her lord? Or shall I say her uncle?
 350 Or he that slew her brothers and her uncles?
 Under what title shall I woo for thee,
 That God, the law, my honor and her love
 Can make seem pleasing to her tender years?

RICHARD

Infer fair England's peace by this alliance.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

355 Which she shall purchase with still-lasting war.

RICHARD

Tell her the king, that may command, entreats—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That, at her hands, which the king's King forbids.

RICHARD

Say she shall be a high and mighty queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To veil the title, as her mother doth.

RICHARD

360 Say I will love her everlastingly.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But how long shall that title "ever" last?

RICHARD

Sweetly in force unto her fair life's end.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But how long fairly shall her sweet life last?

RICHARD

As long as heaven and nature lengthens it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

365 As long as hell and Richard likes of it.

RICHARD

Say I, her sovereign, am her subject low.

liquid tears you've shed will return, transformed into pearls. Your happiness will increase to ten times its original size, plus interest. Go then, my future mother-in-law; go to your daughter. Use your experience to make her bold in her youthful innocence. Prepare her ears to hear my courting words. Put in her tender heart the ambition to be queen. Acquaint the Princess with the sweet, silent hours of joy in marriage, and when I've punished that petty rebel, dull-brained Buckingham, I will return crowned with victory wreaths and lead your daughter to a conqueror's bed. I will transmit all my victory to her, and she will be the real conqueror—the emperor of the emperor.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What should I say to her? Her father's brother wants to be her husband? Or should I say it's her uncle? Or should I say it's the man who killed her brothers and uncles? Under what name should I go wooing on your behalf? What name can please God, the law, and my honor, and also seem appealing to such a young woman?

RICHARD

Imply that fair England's peace depends on this marriage.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

So she will purchase that peace with everlasting war.

RICHARD

Tell her that the King, who has the power to command, instead begs her—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Begs her to do what God, the King of Kings, forbids—marriage between an uncle and a niece.

RICHARD

Say that she will be a high and mighty queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Only so that she can give up that title, as her mother has.

RICHARD

Say I will love her forever.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But how long will that "ever" last?

RICHARD

For as long as her fair life lasts.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But how long will her sweet life last?

RICHARD

As long as heaven and nature lengthen it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

As long as hell and Richard decide.

RICHARD

Say that I, her king, am her lowly subject.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But she, your subject, loathes such sovereignty.

RICHARD

Be eloquent in my behalf to her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

An honest tale speeds best being plainly told.

RICHARD

370 Then plainly to her tell my loving tale.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Plain and not honest is too harsh a style.

RICHARD

Your reasons are too shallow and too quick.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

O no, my reasons are too deep and dead—
Too deep and dead, poor infants, in their graves.

RICHARD

375 Harp not on that string, madam; that is past.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Harp on it still shall I till heart-strings break.

RICHARD

Now by my George, my Garter, and my crown—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Profaned, dishonored, and the third usurped.

RICHARD

I swear—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

380 By nothing, for this is no oath.
Thy George, profaned, hath lost his lordly honor;
Thy garter, blemished, pawned his knightly virtue;
Thy crown, usurped, disgraced his kingly glory.
If something thou wouldst swear to be believed,
385 Swear then by something that thou hast not wronged.

RICHARD

Then, by myself—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Thyself is self-misused.

RICHARD

Now, by the world—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

'Tis full of thy foul wrongs.

RICHARD

390 My father's death—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Thy life hath it dishonored.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But she, your actual subject, hates such a king.

RICHARD

Speak well of me to her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

An honest tale works best when it's told plainly.

RICHARD

Then plainly tell her my loving tale.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Plain and *not* honest is too harsh to hear. Lies need some decoration.

RICHARD

Your answers are too shallow and too lively.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh no, my reasons are too deep and too dead—too deep
and too dead, just like my poor infants in their graves.


RICHARD


Don't harp on that string, madam—that's in the past.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I'll harp on it until my heartstrings break.

RICHARD

Now, by my Saint George, my garter, and my crown  --

 English kings wore a jeweled pendant with the figure of Saint George on it. This pendant was a symbol of the Order of the Garter, the highest order of knighthood. Richard swears by the outward symbols of power and bravery, and Elizabeth argues that he has corrupted these symbols.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The first one profaned, the second dishonored, and the third stolen.

RICHARD

I swear—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

By nothing--because this is no proper oath. Your Saint George, profaned by you, has lost his lordly honor. Your garter, stained by you, has lost its knightly virtue. Your crown, stolen by you, has disgraced its kingly glory. If you want to swear by something that I might believe in, then swear by something that you haven't wronged.

RICHARD

Then I swear by myself—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You've misused yourself.

RICHARD

By the world then—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

It's full of your foul crimes.

RICHARD

By my father's death—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Your life has dishonored his death.

RICHARD

Why then, by God.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God's wrong is most of all.

If thou didst fear to break an oath by Him,

395 The unity the king my husband made

Thou hadst not broken, nor my brothers died.

If thou hadst feared to break an oath by Him,

Th' imperial metal circling now thy head

Had graced the tender temples of my child,

400 And both the princes had been breathing here,

Which now, two tender bedfellows for dust,

Thy broken faith hath made the prey for worms.

What canst thou swear by now?

RICHARD

The time to come.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

405 That thou hast wrongèd in the time o'erpast;

For I myself have many tears to wash

Hereafter time, for time past wronged by thee.

The children live whose fathers thou hast slaughtered,

Ungoverned youth, to wail it in their age;

410 The parents live whose children thou hast butchered,

Old barren plants, to wail it with their age.

Swear not by time to come, for that thou hast

Misused ere used, by times ill-used o'erpast.

RICHARD

As I intend to prosper and repent,

415 So thrive I in my dangerous affairs

Of hostile arms! Myself myself confound,

Heaven and fortune bar me happy hours,

Day, yield me not thy light, nor night thy rest,

Be opposite all planets of good luck

420 To my proceedings if, with dear heart's love,

Immaculate devotion, holy thoughts,

I tender not thy beauteous princely daughter.

In her consists my happiness and thine.

Without her follows to myself and thee,

425 Herself, the land, and many a Christian soul,

Death, desolation, ruin and decay.

It cannot be avoided but by this;

It will not be avoided but by this.

Therefore, dear mother—I must call you so—

430 Be the attorney of my love to her:

Plead what I will be, not what I have been;

Not my deserts, but what I will deserve.

Urge the necessity and state of times,

And be not peevish found in great designs.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

435 Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?

RICHARD

Ay, if the devil tempt you to do good.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I forget myself to be myself?

RICHARD

Ay, if your self's remembrance wrong yourself.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Yet thou didst kill my children.

RICHARD

440 But in your daughter's womb I bury them,

Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed

Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.

RICHARD

Why then, by God.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You've abused God most of all. If you really feared to break

an oath sworn by God, you never would have broken the

oath of friendship and unity we made to the king my

husband before he died--and my brothers wouldn't have

been killed. If you really feared to break an oath sworn by

God, then the crown you now wear would instead be

gracing the tender head of my child--and both the princes

would still be alive. Your broken oaths have resulted in

many corpses, and much food for the worms. What can you

swear by now?

RICHARD

By the future.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You've already wronged that with your past actions. I

myself have many tears left to cry in the future because of

your past crimes. The children whose fathers you

slaughtered are still alive, and they will grow up without

guidance, unfortunate in their adulthood. The parents

whose children you butchered are still alive too, old barren

plants who will be miserable in their old age. Don't swear

by the future, for with your past you've already ruined it.

RICHARD

May I succeed in my dangerous battles to the same degree

that I truly intend to repent and prosper! May I ruin myself;

be deprived of happiness by heaven and destiny; my days

be dark; my nights sleepless; and my luck be bad if I don't

love your beautiful, royal daughter with dear affection, pure

devotion, and holy thoughts. Both my happiness and yours

depends on her. Without her as my queen, death,

desolation, ruin, and decay will fall on me, you, your

daughter, the land, and many a Christian soul. It cannot be

avoided except by this marriage. It *will* not be avoided

except by this marriage. Therefore, dear mother-in-law—for

I must call you that now—be my advocate, pleading on my

behalf to her. Describe what I *will* be, not what I have been.

Don't mention what I deserve now, but what I *will* deserve.

Remind her of how necessary this marriage is for the good

of the country right now, and tell her not to be foolishly

willful about such an important decision.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Will I let myself be tempted by the devil like this?

RICHARD

Yes, if the devil tempts you to do good.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Will I forget to be who I am?

RICHARD

Yes, if your memories of yourself only hurt you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But you killed my children.

RICHARD

But I will bury them in your daughter's womb, and in that

nest of fragrant spices they will be reborn again, to grow

and comfort you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?

RICHARD

And be a happy mother by the deed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

445 I go. Write to me very shortly,
And you shall understand from me her mind.

RICHARD

Bear her my true love's kiss; and so, farewell.

Exit QUEEN ELIZABETH

Relenting fool and shallow, changing woman!

Enter RATCLIFFE, with CATESBY behind

How now, what news?

RATCLIFFE

450 Most mighty sovereign, on the western coast
Rideth a puissant navy. To our shores
Throng many doubtful hollow-hearted friends,
Unarmed and unresolved to beat them back.
'Tis thought that Richmond is their admiral;
455 And there they hull, expecting but the aid
Of Buckingham to welcome them ashore.

RICHARD

Some light-foot friend post to the duke of Norfolk—
Ratcliffe, thyself, or Catesby. Where is he?

CATESBY

Here, my good lord.

RICHARD

460 Catesby, fly to the duke.

CATESBY

I will, my lord, with all convenient haste.

RICHARD

Ratcliffe, come hither. Post to Salisbury.
When thou com'st thither
— *[to CATESBY]* Dull, unmindful villain,
465 Why stay'st thou here and go'st not to the duke?

CATESBY

First, mighty liege, tell me your Highness' pleasure,
What from your Grace I shall deliver to him.

RICHARD

O true, good Catesby. Bid him levy straight
The greatest strength and power that he can make
470 And meet me suddenly at Salisbury.

CATESBY

I go.

Exit

RATCLIFFE

What, may it please you, shall I do at Salisbury?

RICHARD

Why, what wouldst thou do there before I go?

RATCLIFFE

Your Highness told me I should post before.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Will I really go win my daughter over for you?

RICHARD

And make yourself a happy mother by doing so.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I'll go. Write to me very soon, and I'll tell you how she feels.

RICHARD

Give her my true love's kiss. And so, farewell.

QUEEN ELIZABETH exits.

Weak fool! Shallow, fickle woman!

RATCLIFFE enters, with CATESBY behind him.

Hello, what's the news?

RATCLIFFE

Most mighty king, a powerful navy is sailing to our western coast. Many weak, unreliable allies of ours have gathered at the shore to meet the ships—but they are unarmed and undecided about whether or not to fight them. It's thought that Richmond is the invading navy's admiral. Right now the ships are just drifting around offshore, waiting for Buckingham to welcome them to land.

RICHARD

Send some speedy ally to the duke of Norfolk. You go yourself, Ratcliffe—or Catesby. Where is Catesby?

CATESBY

Here, my good lord.

RICHARD

Catesby, hurry to the Duke of Buckingham.

CATESBY

I will go as quickly as I can, my lord.

RICHARD

Ratcliffe, come here. Ride quickly to Salisbury. When you get there--

[To CATESBY] You stupid, mindless villain, why are you still here and not on your way to the Duke?

CATESBY

First, mighty King, tell me what your Highness wants, so I can deliver your message to him.

RICHARD

Oh, true, good Catesby. Tell him to gather the largest army he can in a hurry, and meet me at Salisbury right away.

CATESBY

I'm off.

He exits.

RATCLIFFE

And what would you like me to do at Salisbury?

RICHARD

Why, what would you do there before I arrive?

RATCLIFFE

Your Highness just told me that I should hurry there.

RICHARD

475 My mind is changed.

Enter STANLEY

Stanley, what news with you?

STANLEY

None good, my liege, to please you with the hearing,
Nor none so bad but well may be reported.

RICHARD

480 Hoyday, a riddle! Neither good nor bad.
What need'st thou run so many mile about
When thou mayst tell thy tale the nearest way?
Once more, what news?

STANLEY

Richmond is on the seas.

RICHARD

485 There let him sink, and be the seas on him!
White-livered runagate, what doth he there?

STANLEY

I know not, mighty sovereign, but by guess.

RICHARD

Well, as you guess?

STANLEY

Stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Morton,
He makes for England, here to claim the crown.

RICHARD

490 Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?
Is the king dead, the empire unpossessed?
What heir of York is there alive but we?
And who is England's king but great York's heir?
Then tell me, what makes he upon the seas?

STANLEY

495 Unless for that, my liege, I cannot guess.

RICHARD

Unless for that he comes to be your liege,
You cannot guess wherefore the Welshman comes.
Thou wilt revolt and fly to him, I fear.

STANLEY

No, my good lord. Therefore mistrust me not.

RICHARD

500 Where is thy power, then, to beat him back?
Where be thy tenants and thy followers?
Are they not now upon the western shore,
Safe-conducting the rebels from their ships?

STANLEY

No, my good lord. My friends are in the north.

RICHARD

505 Cold friends to me. What do they in the north
When they should serve their sovereign in the west?

STANLEY

510 They have not been commanded, mighty king.
Pleaseth your Majesty to give me leave,
I'll muster up my friends and meet your Grace
Where and what time your Majesty shall please.

RICHARD

I've changed my mind.

STANLEY enters.

Stanley, what's the news?

STANLEY

My lord, it's nothing so good that it will please you to hear
it, but nothing so bad that I can't report it.

RICHARD

Aha, a riddle! Neither good nor bad. Why do you need to
run in such wide circles when you can get straight to the
point with your story? I'll ask you again: what's the news?

STANLEY

Richmond is on the seas.

RICHARD

Let him sink there, so the seas will be on him! The cowardly
rebel, what is he doing there?

STANLEY

I don't know, mighty king. I can only guess.

RICHARD

Well, what do you guess?

STANLEY

That he's been stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham, and
Morton, and now he's coming to England to claim the
crown.

RICHARD

Is the throne empty? Does the royal sword have no owner?
Is the king dead, the kingdom dispossessed? What living
heir of the York family is there but me? And who can be
England's king but great York's heir? So tell me, what is he
doing at sea?

STANLEY

Unless it's for that then I cannot guess, my lord.

RICHARD

Unless he's coming to be your new king, you can't guess
why that Welshman ⁶ Richmond is coming? You will rebel
and join him, I fear.

STANLEY

No, my good lord. Don't distrust me.

RICHARD

Where is your army, then, to beat him back? Where are your
tenants and your followers? Aren't they on the western
shore right now, helping his rebels disembark safely from
their ships?

STANLEY

No, my good lord. My friends are in the north.

RICHARD

Then they're cold friends to me. What are they doing in the
north when they should be serving their king in the west?

STANLEY

They haven't been commanded to do so, mighty king. If it
would please your Majesty, I'll gather up my friends and
meet your Grace wherever and whenever your Majesty
wants.

⁶ Richmond is descended from the
Welsh courtier Owen Tudor and
Catherine of Valois (Henry V's widow).

RICHARD

Ay, thou wouldst be gone to join with Richmond,
But I'll not trust thee.

STANLEY

Most mighty sovereign,
You have no cause to hold my friendship doubtful.
515 I never was nor never will be false.

RICHARD

Go then and muster men, but leave behind
Your son George Stanley. Look your heart be firm.
Or else his head's assurance is but frail.

STANLEY

So deal with him as I prove true to you.

Exit

Enter a MESSENGER

MESSENGER

520 My gracious sovereign, now in Devonshire,
As I by friends am well advertised,
Sir Edward Courtney and the haughty prelate,
Bishop of Exeter, his elder brother,
With many more confederates are in arms.

Enter SECOND MESSENGER

SECOND MESSENGER

525 In Kent, my liege, the Guilfords are in arms,
And every hour more competitors
Flock to the rebels, and their power grows strong.

Enter THIRD MESSENGER

THIRD MESSENGER

My lord, the army of great Buckingham—

RICHARD

530 Out on you, owls! Nothing but songs of death.
[he striketh him]
There, take thou that till thou bring better news.

THIRD MESSENGER

The news I have to tell your Majesty
Is that by sudden floods and fall of waters
Buckingham's army is dispersed and scattered,
535 And he himself wandered away alone,
No man knows whither.

RICHARD

I cry thee mercy.
There is my purse to cure that blow of thine.
[he gives money]
540 Hath any well-advised friend proclaimed
Reward to him that brings the traitor in?

THIRD MESSENGER

Such proclamation hath been made, my lord.

Enter FOURTH MESSENGER

FOURTH MESSENGER

Sir Thomas Lovell and Lord Marquess Dorset,
'Tis said, my liege, in Yorkshire are in arms.
545 But this good comfort bring I to your Highness:
The Breton navy is dispersed by tempest.
Richmond, in Dorsetshire, sent out a boat
Unto the shore to ask those on the banks
If they were his assistants, yea or no—
550 Who answered him they came from Buckingham

RICHARD

Yes, you want to leave so you can join Richmond. But I
won't trust you.

STANLEY

Most mighty king, you have no reason to doubt my
friendship. I never have been false, and never will be.

RICHARD

Go then and get your men, but leave behind your son,
George Stanley. Make sure your loyalty stays firm, or else he
has a good chance of losing his head.

STANLEY

So treat him as well as my faithfulness deserves.

He exits.

A MESSENGER enters.

MESSENGER

My gracious king, my friends have informed me that Sir
Edward Courtney and his elder brother--the arrogant
Bishop of Exeter--are now in Devonshire with an army.

A SECOND MESSENGER enters.

SECOND MESSENGER


My lord, Buckingham's supporters--the Guilfords--are
armed and gathering in Kent. Every hour more men flock to
join the rebels, and their army grows strong.


A THIRD MESSENGER enters.

THIRD MESSENGER

My lord, great Buckingham's army—

RICHARD

Enough, you owls ! All I hear are songs of death. *[He strikes the THIRD MESSENGER]* There, take that until you
bring me better news.

 Here Richard refers to the belief
that the cry of an owl was a bad omen.

THIRD MESSENGER

The news I have to tell your Majesty is that sudden floods
and heavy rains have dispersed and scattered
Buckingham's army. Buckingham himself has wandered
away alone, though no one knows where.

RICHARD

I beg your pardon. Here's some money to cure that blow I
gave you.

[He gives money] Has any quick-thinking friend of mine
offered a reward to whoever brings that traitor in?

THIRD MESSENGER

Yes, that proclamation has been made, my lord.

A FOURTH MESSENGER enters.

FOURTH MESSENGER

It's reported that Sir Thomas Lovell and the Lord Marquess
of Dorset are gathering an army in Yorkshire. But I bring
your Highness this comfort: Richmond's navy has been
dispersed by a storm. At Dorsetshire, Richmond sent a boat
to shore to ask the men on the banks if they were his allies.
They answered that they were with Buckingham. Richmond
didn't trust them, and he hoisted sail and returned to
Brittany.

Upon his party. He, mistrusting them,
Hoisted sail and made his course for Brittany.

RICHARD

March on, march on, since we are up in arms,
If not to fight with foreign enemies,
555 Yet to beat down these rebels here at home.

Enter CATESBY

CATESBY

My liege, the duke of Buckingham is taken.
That is the best news. That the earl of Richmond
Is with a mighty power landed at Milford,
Is colder tidings, yet they must be told.

RICHARD

560 Away towards Salisbury! While we reason here,
A royal battle might be won and lost.
Someone take order Buckingham be brought
To Salisbury. The rest march on with me.

Flourish. Exeunt

RICHARD

March on, march on, since we're already prepared for
battle. Even if we don't have to fight foreign enemies, we'll
still beat down these rebels here at home.

CATESBY enters.

CATESBY

My lord, the Duke of Buckingham has been captured. That's
the best news. There's worse, but it must be told: The Earl
of Richmond has landed at Milford with a mighty army.

RICHARD

We must go away towards Salisbury! While we talk here, a
royal battle might be won and lost. Someone deliver the
order that Buckingham should be brought to Salisbury. The
rest of you, march on with me.

Trumpets sound. They all exit.

Act 4, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Enter STANLEY and Sir CHRISTOPHER.

STANLEY

Sir Christopher, tell Richmond this from me:
That in the sty of the most deadly boar
My son George Stanley is franked up in hold;
If I revolt, off goes young George's head;
5 The fear of that holds off my present aid.
So get thee gone. Commend me to thy lord.
Withal, say that the queen hath heartily consented
He should espouse Elizabeth her daughter.
But, tell me, where is princely Richmond now?

CHRISTOPHER

10 At Pembroke, or at Ha'rfordwest in Wales.

STANLEY

What men of name resort to him?

CHRISTOPHER

Sir Walter Herbert, a renowned soldier;
Sir Gilbert Talbot, Sir William Stanley,
Oxford, redoubted Pembroke, Sir James Blunt,
15 And Rhys-ap-Thomas, with a valiant crew,
And many other of great name and worth;
And towards London they do bend their power,
If by the way they be not fought withal.

STANLEY



[gives him a paper] Well, hie thee to thy lord.
20 I kiss his hand. My letter will resolve him of my
mind.
Farewell.

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

STANLEY and a priest, Sir CHRISTOPHER, enter.

STANLEY

Sir Christopher, bring this message to Richmond for me: my
son George Stanley is locked up in the **deadly boar's**  **pen**. If I revolt, off goes young George's head. My fear of that
happening prevents me from helping right now. So go
quickly, and give my regards to your lord. Also say that
Queen Elizabeth has readily agreed that Richmond  **should**
marry her daughter Elizabeth. But tell me, where is
princely Richmond now?

CHRISTOPHER

At Pembroke, or at Haverford West in Wales.

STANLEY

What noblemen have joined him?


CHRISTOPHER


Sir Walter Herbert, a renowned soldier; Sir Gilbert Talbot;
your brother, Sir William Stanley; Oxford; the powerful
Pembroke; Sir James Blunt; Rhys-ap-Thomas, with a brave
crew; and many other famous and powerful men. They're
now sending their armies straight to London, if they don't
have to fight along the way.

STANLEY

[Giving him a paper] Well, hurry to your lord. Kiss his hand
for me. This letter will explain my thoughts to him. Farewell.

They exit.

 Once again, we see a character make a disparaging reference to Richard by his heraldic symbol, the boar.

 Here, we see that Queen Elizabeth has gone against her Richard's wishes to marry her daughter Elizabeth. Her shrewd political move will lead to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty.

Act 5, Scene 1

Shakespeare

Enter BUCKINGHAM with SHERIFF and halberds, led to execution

BUCKINGHAM

Will not King Richard let me speak with him?

SHERIFF

No, my good lord. Therefore be patient.

BUCKINGHAM

Hastings and Edward's children, Grey and Rivers,
Holy King Henry and thy fair son Edward,
5 Vaughan, and all that have miscarried
By underhand, corrupted, foul injustice,
If that your moody, discontented souls
Do through the clouds behold this present hour,
Even for revenge mock my destruction.—
10 This is All Souls' Day, fellow, is it not?

SHERIFF

It is.

BUCKINGHAM

Why, then All Souls' Day is my body's doomsday.
This is the day which, in King Edward's time,
I wished might fall on me when I was found
15 False to his children and his wife's allies.
This is the day wherein I wished to fall
By the false faith of him who most I trusted.
This, this All Souls' Day to my fearful soul
Is the determined respite of my wrongs.
20 That high All-seer which I dallied with
Hath turned my feigned prayer on my head
And given in earnest what I begged in jest.
Thus doth he force the swords of wicked men
To turn their own points in their masters' bosoms.
25 Thus Margaret's curse falls heavy upon my neck:
"When he," quoth she, "shall split thy heart with
sorrow,
Remember Margaret was a prophetess."—
Come, lead me, officers, to the block of shame.
30 Wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame.

Exeunt

Shakescleare Translation

BUCKINGHAM enters with SHERIFF and armed guards, leading him to his execution.

BUCKINGHAM

Won't King Richard let me speak with him?

SHERIFF

No, my good lord. So calm down.

BUCKINGHAM

Oh, Hastings; Edward's children; Grey and Rivers; holy King Henry and your fair son Edward; Vaughan; and all who have died because of underhanded, corrupt, foul injustice—if your angry souls still cannot rest and are witnessing this scene through the clouds, then enjoy your revenge and mock my destruction.

[To SHERIFF] This is All Souls' Day, isn't it? 

SHERIFF


It is.

BUCKINGHAM

Why, then All Souls' Day is also my body's Judgment Day. This is the punishment that I once wished might fall on me if I was ever false to King Edward's children or his wife's allies. This is the punishment I wished might fall on me—that I would be betrayed by the man I trusted most. This, this All Souls' Day, is the predestined punishment for my frightened soul. I tried to play games with God—the all-knowing seer—but he has turned my false prayer on my head and earnestly given me what I asked for as a joke. This is how he forces wicked men to turn their swords against their masters. Now Margaret's curse falls heavy on my neck. "When Richard splits your heart in two with sorrow," she said, "remember that Margaret was a prophetess."

[To others] Come, officers. Lead me to the block of shame. I have done evil, so I will get evil. I receive only the blame I deserve.

They all exit.

 All Souls' Day is a day of prayer for the souls of the dead, especially those caught between heaven and hell.

Act 5, Scene 2

Shakespeare

Enter RICHMOND, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and others, with drum and colors

RICHMOND

Fellows in arms, and my most loving friends,
Bruised underneath the yoke of tyranny,
Have we marched on without impediment,
Thus far into the bowels of the land
5 And here receive we from our father Stanley
Lines of fair comfort and encouragement.
The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
That spoiled your summer fields and fruitful vines,
Swills your warm blood like wash, and makes his trough
10 In your embowelled bosoms—this foul swine
Is now even in the center of this isle,

Shakescleare Translation

RICHMOND, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and others enter with drummers and banner-carriers.

RICHMOND

Fellow soldiers and loving friends, all who have suffered under the burden of Richard's tyranny—we have marched this far without obstacles, all the way to the center of England. And here we receive news of encouragement and comfort from my stepfather Stanley. He says this: the wretched, violent, and usurping boar, that ruined your fields and vineyards; drinks your warm blood like water; and uses your disemboweled stomachs as his feeding trough—this foul swine is right now in the center of the country, near the town of Leicester. It's only a day's march from Tamworth, where we are now. In God's name, let's

Near to the town of Leicester, as we learn.
From Tamworth thither is but one day's march.
In God's name, cheerly on, courageous friends,
15 To reap the harvest of perpetual peace
By this one bloody trial of sharp war.

OXFORD

Every man's conscience is a thousand men,
To fight against this guilty homicide.

HERBERT

I doubt not but his friends will turn to us.

BLUNT

20 He hath no friends but who are friends for fear.
Which in his dearest need will fly from him.

RICHMOND

All for our vantage. Then, in God's name, march.
True hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings.
Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings.

Exeunt

continue with cheerful spirits, my courageous friends, to
reap the harvest of eternal peace from this one bloody trial
of war.

OXFORD

Every man's clean conscience is like a thousand swords to
fight against this guilty murderer.

HERBERT

I don't doubt that his friends will turn on him and join us.

BLUNT

He has no friends except for those who are too afraid to
leave him. But they'll abandon him in his time of greatest
need.

RICHMOND

All to our advantage. Then, in God's name, let's march. True
hope is swift, and flies as fast as a swallow. Hope makes
kings into gods, and lesser men into kings.

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 3

Shakespeare

Enter RICHARD, in arms, with NORFOLK, RATCLIFFE, SURREY, and soldiers

RICHARD

Here pitch our tent, even here in Bosworth field.—
My Lord of Surrey, why look you so sad?

SURREY

My heart is ten times lighter than my looks.

RICHARD

My Lord of Norfolk—

NORFOLK

5 Here, most gracious liege.

RICHARD

Norfolk, we must have knocks, ha, must we not?

NORFOLK

We must both give and take, my loving lord.

RICHARD

Up with my tent!—Here will I lie tonight.
But where tomorrow? Well, all's one for that.
10 Who hath descried the number of the traitors?

NORFOLK

Six or seven thousand is their utmost power.

RICHARD

Why, our battalia trebles that account.
Besides, the king's name is a tower of strength
Which they upon the adverse party want.
15 Up with the tent!—Come, noble gentlemen,
Let us survey the vantage of the ground.
Call for some men of sound direction.

Shakescleare Translation

RICHARD enters, dressed in armor, with NORFOLK, RATCLIFFE, SURREY, and soldiers on one side of the stage.

RICHARD

Pitch our tents right here, in Bosworth field.

[To SURREY] My Lord of Surrey, why do you look sad?

SURREY

My heart is ten times lighter than my appearance.

RICHARD

My Lord of Norfolk—

NORFOLK

Here, most gracious lord.

RICHARD

Norfolk, we must have a few swings of the sword, ha, must we not?

NORFOLK

We must both give them and take them, my loving lord.

RICHARD

Put up my tent! I'll sleep here tonight. But where will I sleep
tomorrow? Well, it makes no difference. Who has spied out
the size of the traitor's army?

NORFOLK

Six or seven thousand, at the most.

RICHARD

Why, our army is three times that many. Besides, the King's
name is a tower of strength, which the opposition lacks. Put
up the tent! Come, noble gentlemen, let's survey the
military advantages of this battlefield. Call for some
experienced officers. Let's lack no discipline and make no
delay, for tomorrow will be a busy day, my lords.

Let's lack no discipline, make no delay,
For, lords, tomorrow is a busy day.

Exeunt

Enter RICHMOND, Sir William Brandon, OXFORD, DORSET, HERBERT, BLUNT, and others. The soldiers pitch RICHMOND's tent

RICHMOND

- 20 The weary sun hath made a golden set,
And by the bright track of his fiery car,
Gives token of a goodly day tomorrow.—
Sir William Brandon, you shall bear my standard.—
Give me some ink and paper in my tent;
25 I'll draw the form and model of our battle,
Limit each leader to his several charge,
And part in just proportion our small power.
My Lord of Oxford, you, Sir William Brandon,
And you, Sir Walter Herbert, stay with me.
30 The earl of Pembroke keeps his regiment—
Good Captain Blunt, bear my goodnight to him,
And by the second hour in the morning
Desire the earl to see me in my tent.
Yet one thing more, good captain, do for me.
35 Where is Lord Stanley quartered, do you know?

BLUNT

Unless I have mista'en his colors much,
Which well I am assured I have not done,
His regiment lies half a mile, at least,
South from the mighty power of the king.

RICHMOND

- 40 If without peril it be possible,
Sweet Blunt, make some good means to speak with him,
And give him from me this most needful note.

He hands him a paper

BLUNT

Upon my life, my lord, I'll undertake it.
And so God give you quiet rest tonight!

RICHMOND

- 45 Good night, good Captain Blunt.

BLUNT exits

Come, gentlemen,
Let us consult upon tomorrow's business
Into my tent. The dew is raw and cold.

Enter, to his tent, RICHARD, NORFOLK, RATCLIFFE, CATESBY, and others

RICHARD

What is "t o'clock?

CATESBY

- 50 It's suppertime, my lord. It's nine o'clock.

RICHARD

I will not sup tonight. Give me some ink and paper.
What, is my beaver easier than it was?
And all my armor laid into my tent?

CATESBY

It is, my liege, and all things are in readiness.

They all exit.

RICHMOND, Sir William BRANDON, OXFORD, DORSET, HERBERT, BLUNT, and others enter on the other side of the stage. Some soldiers pitch RICHMOND's tent on that side of the stage.

RICHMOND

The weary sun has had a golden sunset, and left a bright trail in the sky. This is an omen that tomorrow will be a goodly day.

[To BRANDON] Sir William Brandon, you will carry my banner.

[To others] Bring some ink and paper to my tent, and I'll draw out the shape and strategy of our battle, appoint each leader to his specific troops, and divide up our small army.

[To OXFORD, BRANDON, and HERBERT] My Lord of Oxford, you, Sir William Brandon, and you, Sir Walter Herbert, stay with me. The Earl of Pembroke will stay with his regiment.

[To BLUNT] Good Captain Blunt, tell the Earl goodnight for me, and tell him to come see me in my tent by two in the morning. And one more thing, good Blunt: do you know where Lord Stanley is staying?

BLUNT

Unless I've mistaken his banners--which I'm sure I haven't--his regiment lies at least half a mile south of the King's mighty army.

RICHMOND

Sweet Captain Blunt, if it can be done without too much danger, find a way to speak with him, and give him this important note from me.

He hands him a paper.

BLUNT

I swear by my life that I'll do this for you, my lord. And may God give you a quiet, restful night!

RICHMOND

Goodnight, good Captain Blunt.

BLUNT exits.

Come, gentlemen, let's go to my tent and discuss tomorrow's business. The night is too raw and cold to stay outside.

RICHARD, NORFOLK, RATCLIFFE, CATESBY, and others enter. Some soldiers pitch RICHARD's tent.

RICHARD

What time is it?

CATESBY

It's dinnertime, my lord. It's nine o'clock.

RICHARD

I will not eat tonight. Give me some ink and paper. Is my helmet's visor working better now? And is my armor laid out in my tent?

CATESBY

It is, my lord. Everything's ready.

RICHARD

55 Good Norfolk, hie thee to thy charge.
Use careful watch. Choose trusty sentinels.

NORFOLK

I go, my lord.

RICHARD

Stir with the lark tomorrow, gentle Norfolk.

NORFOLK

I warrant you, my lord.

Exit

RICHARD

60 Catesby.

CATESBY

My lord.

RICHARD

Send out a pursuivant-at-arms
To Stanley's regiment. Bid him bring his power
Before sunrising, lest his son George fall
65 Into the blind cave of eternal night.

Exit CATESBY

[to soldiers] Fill me a bowl of wine. Give me a watch.
Saddle white Surrey for the field to-morrow.
Look that my staves be sound, and not too heavy.—
Ratcliffe.

RATCLIFFE

70 My lord.

RICHARD

Sawst thou the melancholy Lord Northumberland?

RATCLIFFE

Thomas the earl of Surrey and himself,
Much about cockshut time, from troop to troop
Went through the army cheering up the soldiers.

RICHARD

75 So, I am satisfied. Give me a bowl of wine.
I have not that alacrity of spirit
Nor cheer of mind that I was wont to have.
Set it down. Is ink and paper ready?

RATCLIFFE

It is, my lord.

RICHARD

80 Bid my guard watch. Leave me.
Ratcliffe, about the mid of night come to my tent
And help to arm me. Leave me, I say.

Exeunt Ratcliffe and the other attendants. RICHARD sleeps.

Enter STANLEY to RICHMOND in his tent, lords and others attending

STANLEY

Fortune and victory sit on thy helm!

RICHARD

Good Norfolk, hurry to your post. Make sure everyone is on
constant alert. Choose trusty watchmen.

NORFOLK

I'm off to do it, my lord.

RICHARD

Rise with the lark at dawn tomorrow, gentle Norfolk.

NORFOLK

I promise I will, my lord.

He exits.

RICHARD

Catesby.

CATESBY

My lord.

RICHARD

Send out a junior officer to Stanley's regiment. Tell Stanley
to bring his army here before sunrise, or else his son George
will go to his eternal rest.

CATESBY exits.

[To soldiers] Give me a goblet of wine. Give me a personal
guard. Saddle my white horse Surrey for the battle
tomorrow. Make sure that my lances are strong, but not too
heavy.

[To RATCLIFFE] Ratcliffe!

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

Did you see the gloomy Lord Northumberland?

RATCLIFFE

He and Thomas, the Earl of Surrey, were moving from troop
to troop around twilight, and cheering up the soldiers.

RICHARD

Good, I am satisfied. Give me some wine. I don't have the
same energetic spirit or optimistic mind that I used to. Set
down the goblet. Is the ink and paper ready?

RATCLIFFE

It is, my lord.

RICHARD

Tell my guard to be on alert. Now leave me. Ratcliffe, come
to my tent around midnight and help me put on my armor.
Now leave me, I say.

*RATCLIFFE and the other attendants exit. RICHARD falls
asleep.*

*STANLEY enters and goes to RICHMOND's tent, where lords
and others are attending him.*

STANLEY

May fortune and victory be yours!

RICHMOND

85 All comfort that the dark night can afford
Be to thy person, noble father-in-law.
Tell me, how fares our loving mother?

STANLEY

I, by attorney, bless thee from thy mother,
Who prays continually for Richmond's good.
So much for that. The silent hours steal on,
90 And flaky darkness breaks within the east.
In brief, for so the season bids us be,
Prepare thy battle early in the morning,
And put thy fortune to the arbitrament
Of bloody strokes and mortal-starting war.
95 I, as I may—that which I would I cannot,—
With best advantage will deceive the time,
And aid thee in this doubtful shock of arms.
But on thy side I may not be too forward,
Lest, being seen, thy brother, tender George,
100 Be executed in his father's sight.
Farewell. The leisure and the fearful time
Cuts off the ceremonious vows of love
And ample interchange of sweet discourse,
Which so-long-sundered friends should dwell upon.
105 God give us leisure for these rites of love!
Once more, adieu. Be valiant, and speed well.

RICHMOND

Good lords, conduct him to his regiment:
I'll strive with troubled thoughts to take a nap,
Lest leaden slumber peise me down tomorrow,
110 When I should mount with wings of victory.
Once more, good night, kind lords and gentlemen.

Exeunt all but RICHMOND

O Thou, whose captain I account myself,
Look on my forces with a gracious eye.
Put in their hands thy bruising irons of wrath,
115 That they may crush down with a heavy fall
The usurping helmets of our adversaries!
Make us thy ministers of chastisement,
That we may praise thee in the victory!
To thee I do commend my watchful soul,
120 Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes.
Sleeping and waking, O, defend me still!
[Sleeps]

Enter the GHOST OF PRINCE EDWARD, son to KING HENRY VI

GHOST OF PRINCE EDWARD

[to RICHARD] Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow!
Think how thou stabbed'st me in my prime of youth
125 At Tewkesbury. Despair therefore, and die!
[to RICHMOND]
Be cheerful, Richmond, for the wrongèd souls
Of butchered princes fight in thy behalf.
King Henry's issue, Richmond, comforts thee.

Exit

Enter the GHOST OF KING HENRY VI

GHOST OF KING HENRY VI

130 *[to RICHARD]* When I was mortal, my anointed body
By thee was punchèd full of deadly holes.
Think on the Tower and me. Despair, and die!
Harry the Sixth bids thee despair and die.
[to RICHMOND]
135 Virtuous and holy, be thou conqueror.
Harry, that prophesied thou shouldst be king,
Doth comfort thee in thy sleep. Live and flourish.

RICHMOND

Take all the comfort that such a dark night as this can offer,
noble father-in-law. Tell me, how is my loving mother?

STANLEY

I bless you on your mother's behalf. She prays continually
for you. But enough of that. The silent hours keep passing,
and dawn is breaking in the east. To be brief—as the
situation requires—you should prepare your army early in
the morning. Let bloody fighting and deadly war be the
judges of your destiny. I can't help you in this battle as
much as I'd like to, but I'll do the best I can without Richard
finding out. If I act too boldly on your behalf and Richard
notices, then your stepbrother, young George, will be
executed in front of me. Farewell. The danger and urgency
of the current situation must keep us from the long
greetings and happy catching-up that friends like us, who
have been separated for so long, should have. But may God
grant us time for all that soon! Once more, farewell. Be
brave, and do well.

RICHMOND

Good lords, escort him to his regiment. I'll wrestle with my
troubled thoughts and try to take a nap, so that sleepiness
won't weigh me down tomorrow and keep me from flying
on the wings of victory. Once more, good night, kind lords
and gentlemen.

Everyone exits except for RICHMOND.

Oh God--of whose side I call myself captain--please look
upon my forces with a gracious eye. Put the bruising swords
of anger in their hands, so they can crush the helmets of our
enemies! Make us agents of your divine punishment, so we
can praise you when we're victorious! I entrust my soul to
you now, before I close my eyes and fall asleep. Oh God,
defend me always, whether sleeping or waking! *[He falls
asleep]*

*The GHOST OF PRINCE EDWARD, King Henry VI's son,
enters.*

GHOST OF PRINCE EDWARD

[To RICHARD] May I weigh down your soul tomorrow!
Remember how you stabbed me at Tewkesbury in the
prime of my life. So despair, and die!

[To RICHMOND] Be cheerful, Richmond, for the wronged
souls of butchered princes fight on your side. I, King Henry's
son, offer you my comfort, Richmond.

He exits.

The GHOST OF KING HENRY VI enters.

GHOST OF KING HENRY VI

[To RICHARD] When I was alive, you stabbed my kingly body
full of deadly holes. Remember the Tower, and remember
me. Despair, and die! Henry the Sixth tells you to despair
and die!

[To RICHMOND] You who are virtuous and holy, be also
victorious. I, Henry--who prophesied that you would be
king one day--comforts you in your sleep. Live and prosper!

*Exit**Enter the GHOST OF CLARENCE***GHOST OF CLARENCE**

[to RICHARD] Let me sit heavy in thy soul tomorrow,
I, that was washed to death with fulsome wine,

140 Poor Clarence, by thy guile betrayed to death.

Tomorrow in the battle think on me,
And fall thy edgeless sword. Despair, and die!

[to RICHMOND] Thou offspring of the house of Lancaster,
The wrongèd heirs of York do pray for thee

145 Good angels guard thy battle. Live and flourish.

*Exit**Enter the GHOSTS OF RIVERS, GREY, and VAUGHAN***GHOST OF RIVERS**

[to RICHARD] Let me sit heavy in thy soul tomorrow,
Rivers, that died at Pomfret. Despair, and die!

GHOST OF GREY

[to RICHARD] Think upon Grey, and let thy soul despair!

GHOST OF VAUGHAN

[to RICHARD]

150 Think upon Vaughan, and with guilty fear
Let fall thy lance. Despair, and die!

ALL

[to RICHMOND]

Awake, and think our wrongs in Richard's bosom
Will conquer him! Awake, and win the day.

*Exeunt**Enter the GHOSTS OF the two young PRINCES***GHOSTS OF PRINCES**

155 *[to RICHARD]*
Dream on thy cousins smothered in the Tower.
Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard,
And weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death.
Thy nephews' souls bid thee despair and die.

160 *[to RICHMOND]*
Sleep, Richmond, sleep in peace and wake in joy.
Good angels guard thee from the boar's annoy.
Live, and beget a happy race of kings.
Edward's unhappy sons do bid thee flourish.

*Exeunt**Enter the GHOST OF HASTINGS***GHOST OF HASTINGS**

165 *[to RICHARD]* Bloody and guilty, guiltily awake,
And in a bloody battle end thy days.

Think on Lord Hastings. Despair and die!

[to RICHMOND] Quiet, untroubled soul, awake, awake.
Arm, fight, and conquer for fair England's sake.

*He exits.**Enter the GHOST OF ANNE***GHOST OF ANNE**

170 *[to RICHARD]*
Richard, thy wife, that wretched Anne thy wife,
That never slept a quiet hour with thee,
Now fills thy sleep with perturbations.

*He exits.**The GHOST OF CLARENCE enters.***GHOST OF CLARENCE**

[To RICHARD] May I weigh down your soul tomorrow! It's
me, poor Clarence, who was drowned to death in a barrel of
sickening wine, betrayed by your plotting. Remember me
tomorrow in the battle, and let your blunted sword fall from
your hand. Despair, and die!

[To RICHMOND] You offspring of the house of Lancaster, the
wronged heirs of York pray for you. Good angels will guard
you in battle. Live and prosper!

*He exits.**The GHOSTS OF RIVERS, GREY, and VAUGHAN enter.***GHOST OF RIVERS**

[To RICHARD] May I weigh down your soul tomorrow! It's
me, Rivers, who died at Pomfret. Despair, and die!

GHOST OF GREY

[To RICHARD] Remember Grey, and let your soul despair!

GHOST OF VAUGHAN

[To RICHARD] Remember Vaughan, and drop your lance
with guilt and fear. Despair, and die!

ALL

[To RICHMOND] Wake up, and believe that Richard's guilty
conscience will be his downfall! Wake up, and win the day!

*They exit.**The GHOSTS OF the two young PRINCES enter.***GHOSTS OF PRINCES**

[To RICHARD] Dream about your nephews, smothered in
the Tower. Richard, may we weigh down your soul like lead,
and drag you down to ruin, shame, and death. Your
nephews' souls tell you to despair and die!

[To RICHMOND] Sleep, Richmond, sleep in peace and wake
in joy. Good angels will protect you from the boar's attacks.
Live, and give birth to a happy race of kings. Edward's
unhappy sons tell you to prosper!

*They exit.**The GHOST OF HASTINGS enters.***GHOST OF HASTINGS**

[To RICHARD] You bloody, guilty man, wake up full of guilt
and then die in a bloody battle! Remember Lord Hastings.
Despair, and die!

[To RICHMOND] You quiet, untroubled soul, wake up, wake
up! Arm yourself, fight, and win, for fair England's sake!

*He exits.**The GHOST OF ANNE enters.***GHOST OF ANNE**

[To RICHARD] Richard, it's your wife, wretched Anne your
wife, who never had a quiet hour of sleep with you. Now
I've come to fill your sleep with disturbing thoughts.

175 Tomorrow, in the battle, think on me,
And fall thy edgeless sword: Despair and die!
[to RICHMOND] Thou quiet soul, sleep thou a quiet
sleep.
Dream of success and happy victory.
Thy adversary's wife doth pray for thee.

Exit

Enter the GHOST OF BUCKINGHAM

GHOST OF BUCKINGHAM

180 [to RICHARD] The last was I that helped thee to the
crown;
The last was I that felt thy tyranny.
O, in the battle think on Buckingham,
And die in terror of thy guiltiness.
185 Dream on, dream on, of bloody deeds and death.
Fainting, despair; despairing, yield thy breath.
[to RICHMOND] I died for hope ere I could lend thee
aid,
But cheer thy heart, and be thou not dismayed.
190 God and good angels fight on Richmond's side,
And Richard fall in height of all his pride.

Exit

RICHARD starts out of his dream

RICHARD

Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds!
Have mercy, Jesu!—Soft, I did but dream.
O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
195 The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
Richard loves Richard; that is, I and I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.
200 Then fly! What, from myself? Great reason why:
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself
205 For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain. Yet I lie. I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
210 And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;
All several sins, all used in each degree,
Throng to the bar, crying all, "Guilty! guilty!"
215 I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,
And if I die no soul will pity me.
And wherefore should they, since that I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murdered
220 Came to my tent, and every one did threat
Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

Enter RATCLIFFE

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

Zounds, who is there?

RATCLIFFE

225 Ratcliffe, my lord, 'tis I. The early village cock
Hath twice done salutation to the morn.
Your friends are up and buckle on their armor.

Tomorrow in the battle, remember me and drop your
blunted sword. Despair, and die!

[To RICHMOND] You quiet soul, sleep a quiet sleep. Dream
of success and happy victory. Your enemy's wife prays for
you.

She exits.

The GHOST OF BUCKINGHAM enters.

GHOST OF BUCKINGHAM

[To RICHARD] I was the last to help you to the crown, and
the last to feel the sting of your tyranny. Oh, in battle
remember Buckingham, and die in terror of your own guilt.
Dream on, dream on, of bloody deeds and death. And
tomorrow, fall and despair, and despairing die!

[To RICHMOND] I died while hoping that I could help you,
but be cheerful, and don't worry. God and his good angels
fight on your side, and Richard will fall from the height of
his pride.

He exits.

RICHARD starts up out of his dream.

RICHARD

Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds! Have mercy,
Jesus! But wait, I was only dreaming. Oh, you coward
conscience, how you torture me! The candles burn blue. It
is now dead midnight. I'm in a cold sweat and trembling
with fear. What am I so afraid of? Myself? There's no one
else here. Richard loves Richard; that is, I am only myself. Is
there a murderer here? No. But yes, it's *me*. Then run away!
What, from myself? Yes, so I won't take revenge. What,
revenge myself upon myself? Alas, I love myself. But why?
Have I ever done myself any good? No, no! Alas, I hate
myself instead, for all the hateful deeds I've committed. I
am a villain. But I'm lying—I am not a villain. Fool, speak
well of yourself. Fool, do not flatter yourself. My conscience
has a thousand separate voices, and each voice tells a
separate story, and each story condemns me as a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree; murder, ominous
murder, in the highest degree; all kinds of sins, all done in
each degree—bad, worse, and worst—all of these crimes cry
out "Guilty! guilty!" I will despair. There is no one who loves
me, and if I die no one will pity me. And why should they,
since I can't even find any pity for myself in myself? Just
now it seemed like the souls of all those I murdered came
to my tent, and every one of them threatened that
vengeance would fall on my head tomorrow.

RATCLIFFE enters.

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

By God! Who's there?

RATCLIFFE

My lord, it's Ratcliffe, it's me. The village rooster has already
crowed twice to welcome the dawn. Your friends are up and
putting on their armor.

RICHARD

O Ratcliffe, I have dreamed a fearful dream!
What think'st thou, will our friends prove all true?

RATCLIFFE

No doubt, my lord.

RICHARD

230 O Ratcliffe, I fear, I fear.

RATCLIFFE

Nay, good my lord, be not afraid of shadows.

RICHARD

By the apostle Paul, shadows tonight
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
235 Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond.
'Tis not yet near day. Come, go with me;
Under our tents I'll play the eavesdropper
To see if any mean to shrink from me.

Exeunt

Enter the lords to RICHMOND, sitting in his tent

LORDS

Good morrow, Richmond.

RICHMOND

240 Cry mercy, lords and watchful gentlemen,
That you have ta'en a tardy sluggard here.

A LORD

How have you slept, my lord?

RICHMOND

The sweetest sleep and fairest-boding dreams
That ever entered in a drowsy head
245 Have I since your departure had, my lords.
Methought their souls whose bodies Richard murdered
Came to my tent and cried on victory.
I promise you, my soul is very jocund
In the remembrance of so fair a dream.
250 How far into the morning is it, lords?

LORDS

Upon the stroke of four.

RICHMOND

Why, then 'tis time to arm and give direction.
[his oration to his soldiers]
More than I have said, loving countrymen,
255 The leisure and enforcement of the time
Forbids to dwell upon. Yet remember this:
God and our good cause fight upon our side.
The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,
Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our faces.
260 Richard except, those whom we fight against
Had rather have us win than him they follow.
For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen,
A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
One raised in blood, and one in blood established;
265 One that made means to come by what he hath,
And slaughtered those that were the means to help him;
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil
Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
One that hath ever been God's enemy.
270 Then if you fight against God's enemy,
God will, in justice, ward you as his soldiers.
If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain.
If you do fight against your country's foes,

275

RICHARD

Oh, Ratcliffe, I have dreamed a fearful dream! What do you think, will all our friends prove loyal?

RATCLIFFE

No doubt, my lord.

RICHARD

Oh, Ratcliffe, I'm afraid, I'm afraid.

RATCLIFFE

No, my good lord, don't be afraid of shadows.

RICHARD

By Saint Paul, tonight shadows have struck more terror in my soul than ten thousand soldiers could, even if they were dressed in impenetrable armor and led by that fool Richmond. It's not yet daytime. Come with me; I'll eavesdrop under our tents to see if anyone plans to desert me.

They exit.

RICHMOND'S LORDS enter his tent, where he is sitting.

LORDS

Good morning, Richmond.

RICHMOND

I beg your pardon, lords and gentlemen who stayed awake and alert—you've caught me sleeping late.

A LORD

How did you sleep, my lord?

RICHMOND

My lords, since you last left me, I've had the sweetest sleep and the most hopeful dreams that ever entered someone's drowsy head. It seemed like the souls of those Richard had murdered came to my tent and encouraged me to victory. I promise you, my soul is very joyful now, remembering that beautiful dream. How late in the morning is it, lords?

LORDS

Almost four o'clock.

RICHMOND

Why, then it's time to arm myself and direct my troops.

[To soldiers] The urgency of the present forbids me from saying all I want to say, my loving countrymen, but remember this: God and a good cause fight on our side. The prayers of holy saints and the souls of those Richard has wronged will protect us like high fortress walls. Other than Richard himself, those we fight against would prefer that we won instead of the king they follow. For who is this king they follow? Truly, gentlemen, he is a bloody tyrant and a murderer, one who took the throne through bloodshed and has held it through further bloodshed. He manipulated events to his advantage, and then slaughtered those who helped him do the manipulating. He is a foul, worthless stone, who only seems precious because he's wrapped himself in the gold of England's throne, where he falsely sits. He has always been God's enemy. And if you fight against God's enemy, then God--in his justice--will protect you as his soldiers. If you struggle to bring down a tyrant, then you will sleep in peace when the tyrant is dead. If you fight against your country's enemies, then your country's wealth will repay you for your suffering. If you fight to protect your wives, then your wives will welcome you home

Your country's fat shall pay your pains the hire.
 If you do fight in safeguard of your wives,
 Your wives shall welcome home the conquerors.
 If you do free your children from the sword,
 Your children's children quits it in your age.
 280 Then, in the name of God and all these rights,
 Advance your standards. Draw your willing swords.
 For me, the ransom of my bold attempt
 Shall be this cold corpse on the earth's cold face;
 But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt
 285 The least of you shall share his part thereof.
 Sound drums and trumpets boldly and cheerfully;
 God and Saint George! Richmond and victory!

Exeunt

Enter King RICHARD, RATCLIFFE, attendants and forces

RICHARD

What said Northumberland as touching Richmond?

RATCLIFFE

That he was never trained up in arms.

RICHARD

290 He said the truth. And what said Surrey then?

RATCLIFFE

He smiled and said "The better for our purpose."

RICHARD

He was in the right, and so indeed it is.

The clock striketh

Tell the clock there. Give me a calendar.
[He looks in an almanac]

295 Who saw the sun today?

RATCLIFFE

Not I, my lord.

RICHARD

Then he disdains to shine, for by the book
 He should have braved the east an hour ago
 A black day will it be to somebody. Ratcliffe!

RATCLIFFE

300 My lord.

RICHARD

The sun will not be seen today.
 The sky doth frown and lour upon our army.
 I would these dewy tears were from the ground.
 Not shine today? Why, what is that to me
 305 More than to Richmond, for the selfsame heaven
 That frowns on me looks sadly upon him.

Enter NORFOLK

NORFOLK

Arm, arm, my lord. The foe vaunts in the field.

RICHARD

Come, bustle, bustle. Caparison my horse.—
 Call up Lord Stanley; bid him bring his power.—
 310 I will lead forth my soldiers to the plain,
 And thus my battle shall be orderèd:
 My forward shall be drawn out all in length,
 Consisting equally of horse and foot;
 Our archers shall be placèd in the midst.
 315 John Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Earl of Surrey,
 Shall have the leading of this foot and horse.

as conquerors. If you free your children from the sword,
 then your children's children will repay you in your old age.
 So, in the name of God and all these truths, raise your
 banners. Draw your swords. As for me, if I fail and I'm
 captured, the only ransom I'll offer will be my cold corpse in
 the cold earth. But if I succeed, every one of your will share
 in my profits. Beat the drums and play the trumpets boldly
 and cheerfully. For God and Saint George! Richmond and
 victory!

They all exit.

RICHARD, RATCLIFFE, attendants, and soldiers enter.

RICHARD

What did Northumberland say regarding Richmond?

RATCLIFFE

That he was never trained to be a soldier.

RICHARD

He said the truth. And what did Surrey say to that?

RATCLIFFE

He smiled and said, "All the better for us."

RICHARD

He was right, and so indeed it is.

The clock strikes.

Read the clock there. Give me an almanac. *[He looks in the almanac]* Has anyone seen the sun yet today?

RATCLIFFE

Not I, my lord.

RICHARD

Then it's refusing to shine. For according to this almanac, it
 should have risen in the east an hour ago. It will be a dark
 day for somebody today. Hey, Ratcliffe!

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

The sun won't come out today. The sky frowns and scowls
 at our army. I wish there wasn't all this dew on the ground.
 So the sun won't shine today? Why, that shouldn't matter
 any more to me than it does to Richmond. The same
 heaven that frowns on me also looks sadly on him.

NORFOLK enters.

NORFOLK

Arm yourself, my lord. The enemy is on the battlefield.

RICHARD

Come, hurry, hurry. Prepare my horse. Call up Lord Stanley.
 Tell him to bring his army. I will lead my soldiers in the field,
 with my army arranged like this: the front lines will be equal
 parts horsemen and foot soldiers and our archers will be
 placed in the middle. John--the Duke of Norfolk--and
 Thomas--the Earl of Surrey--will lead the horsemen and
 foot soldiers. With them placed like this, I will follow with
 the main army, which will be defended on both sides by our

They thus directed, we will follow
 In the main battle, whose puissance on either side
 Shall be well winged with our chiefest horse.
 320 This, and Saint George to boot—What think'st
 thou, Norfolk?

NORFOLK

A good direction, warlike sovereign.

He sheweth him a paper

This found I on my tent this morning.

RICHARD

[reads]

325 Jockey of Norfolk, be not so bold.
 For Dickon thy master is bought and sold.
 A thing devised by the enemy.—
 Go, gentlemen, every man unto his charge.
 Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls.
 330 Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
 Devised at first to keep the strong in awe.
 Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
 March on. Join bravely. Let us to it pell mell
 If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.
 335 *[his oration to his army]*
 What shall I say more than I have inferred?
 Remember whom you are to cope withal,
 A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,
 A scum of Bretons and base lackey peasants,
 340 Whom their o'er-cloyed country vomits forth
 To desperate ventures and assured destruction.
 You sleeping safe, they bring to you unrest;
 You having lands and blessed with beauteous wives,
 They would restrain the one, distain the other.
 345 And who doth lead them but a paltry fellow,
 Long kept in Brittany at our mother's cost,
 A milksop, one that never in his life
 Felt so much cold as overshoes in snow?
 Let's whip these stragglers o'er the seas again,
 350 Lash hence these overweening rags of France,
 These famished beggars weary of their lives,
 Who, but for dreaming on this fond exploit,
 For want of means, poor rats, had hanged themselves.
 If we be conquered, let men conquer us,
 355 And not these bastard Bretons, whom our fathers
 Have in their own land beaten, bobbed, and thumped,
 And in record, left them the heirs of shame.
 Shall these enjoy our lands, lie with our wives,
 Ravish our daughters?

Drum afar off

360 Hark! I hear their drum.
 Fight, gentlemen of England.—Fight, bold yeomen.—
 Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head.—
 Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood.
 Amaze the welkin with your broken staves—

Enter a MESSENGER

365 What says Lord Stanley? Will he bring his power?

MESSENGER

My lord, he doth deny to come.

RICHARD

Off with his son George's head!

NORFOLK

My lord, the enemy is past the marsh.
 After the battle let George Stanley die.

best horsemen. We will have all this, and Saint George on
 our side as well. What do you think, Norfolk?

NORFOLK


A good plan, my warrior king.


He shows RICHARD a piece of paper.

I found this on my tent this morning.

RICHARD

[Reading] "Jack of Norfolk, don't be too bold, for Dick your
 master's been bought and sold." Some plot of the enemy's.
 Go, gentlemen, every man to his position. Don't let our
 babbling dreams frighten our souls. "Conscience" is just a
 word that cowards use to keep down the strong. Our
 strength will make us right; our swords will be the law.
 March on. Meet the enemy bravely. Let's go down
 fighting—if not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.

[To his army] What more can I say than what I've reported?
 Remember who you're about to meet in battle: a band of
 vagabonds, rascals, and runaways; Breton scum and
 lowbred peasants. Their overcrowded country vomits them
 out to pursue their desperate adventures and suicidal
 enterprises. You sleep in safety, and they bring you unrest;
 you own lands, and they try to take them; you are blessed
 with beautiful wives, and they try to defile them. And who
 leads these men? Just an inconsequential fellow who's
 been living in Brittany at his mother's expense, a coward
 who's never in his life felt more cold than when snow came
 in over his shoes! Let's whip these stragglers back over the
 sea, and strike back these overflowing rags of France; these
 starving beggars weary of their own lives, who would have
 hanged themselves from hunger—poor rats—if they weren't
 dreaming of this foolish exploit. If we are to be conquered,
 then let us be conquered by real men, not these French
 bastards. Our forefathers  already beat them down in
 their own land, shaming them forever. Will we let these men
 enjoy our lands, sleep with our wives, rape our daughters?

 Here, Richard refers to Edward III
 and Henry V's conquests in France.

Distant drums sound offstage.

Listen! I hear their drums. Fight, gentlemen of England!
 Fight, bold citizens! Draw, archers—draw your bows all the
 way back! Horsemen, spur your proud horses hard, and ride
 with violence, to violence! Break your lances against the
 enemy and amaze even the heavens!

A MESSENGER enters.

What does Lord Stanley say? Will he bring his army?

MESSENGER

My lord, he refuses to come.

RICHARD

Off with his son George's head!

NORFOLK

My lord, the enemy has passed the marsh. Let George
 Stanley die after the battle is over.

RICHARD

370 A thousand hearts are great within my bosom.
Advance our standards. Set upon our foes.
Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons.
Upon them! Victory sits on our helms.

Exeunt

RICHARD

A thousand hearts seem to beat within my chest. Advance our banners. Attack our enemies. May our ancient battle cry of courage, fair Saint George, inspire us with the fury of fiery dragons! Attack! Victory rides with us.

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 4

Shakespeare

Alarum. Excursions. Enter NORFOLK and forces fighting; to him
CATESBY

CATESBY

Rescue, my lord of Norfolk, rescue, rescue!
The king enacts more wonders than a man,
Daring an opposite to every danger.
His horse is slain, and all on foot he fights,
5 Seeking for Richmond in the throat of death.
Rescue, fair lord, or else the day is lost!

NORFOLK exits with soldiers.

Alarums. Enter RICHARD

RICHARD

A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY

Withdraw, my lord. I'll help you to a horse.

RICHARD

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,
10 And I will stand the hazard of the die.
I think there be six Richmonds in the field;
Five have I slain today instead of him.
A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!

Exeunt

Shakesclore Translation

Trumpets and drums play military music, and soldiers fight.
NORFOLK and his soldiers enter, fighting. CATESBY enters
and runs to him.

CATESBY

Help, my lord of Norfolk, help, help! The king has performed more wonders than seems humanly possible, facing down every dangerous enemy himself. His horse is killed, and now he's fighting on foot, searching for Richmond even in the face of death. Help, honorable lord, or else the battle is lost!

NORFOLK and soldiers exit.

Blasts of military music. RICHARD enters.

RICHARD

A horse, a horse! I'd give my kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY

Retreat from the fighting, my lord. I'll help you get to a horse.

RICHARD

You villain, I have gambled my life on this throw of the dice, and I will take the risks that come with it. I think there are six Richmonds on the battlefield; I've killed five already who looked like him. A horse, a horse! I'd give my kingdom for a horse!

They all exit.

Act 5, Scene 5

Shakespeare

Alarum. Enter RICHARD and RICHMOND. They fight. RICHARD is slain.
Retreat and flourish. Enter RICHMOND, STANLEY bearing the crown,
with divers other lords and soldiers

RICHMOND

God and your arms be praised, victorious friends!
The day is ours; the bloody dog is dead.

STANLEY

[offering him the crown]

Courageous Richmond, well hast thou acquit thee.
5 Lo, here this long-usurped royalty
From the dead temples of this bloody wretch

Shakesclore Translation

Trumpets and drums play blasts of military music. RICHARD and RICHMOND enter. They fight. RICHARD is killed.
RICHMOND exits and RICHARD's body is carried off. A trumpet plays to signal a retreat. RICHMOND returns with STANLEY, who is holding the crown, and various other lords and soldiers.

RICHMOND

May God and your swords be praised, victorious friends!
The day is ours. The bloody dog is dead.

STANLEY

[Offering him the crown] Courageous Richmond, you fought well. See, I took this long-stolen crown from the dead forehead of that bloody wretch. Now let it grace your brows. Wear it, enjoy it, and do much with it.

Have I plucked off, to grace thy brows withal.
Wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it.

RICHMOND

Great God of heaven, say amen to all!
10 But tell me, is young George Stanley living?

STANLEY

He is, my lord, and safe in Leicester town,
Whither, if it please you, we may now withdraw us.

RICHMOND

What men of name are slain on either side?

STANLEY

John Duke of Norfolk, Walter, Lord Ferrers,
15 Sir Robert Brakenbury, and Sir William Brandon.

RICHMOND

Inter their bodies as becomes their births.
Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled
That in submission will return to us.
And then, as we have ta'en the sacrament,
20 We will unite the white rose and the red.
Smile heaven upon this fair conjunction,
That long have frowned upon their enmity.
What traitor hears me and says not "Amen?"
England hath long been mad and scarred herself.
25 The brother blindly shed the brother's blood.
The father rashly slaughtered his own son.
The son, compelled, been butcher to the sire.
All this divided York and Lancaster,
Divided, in their dire division.
30 O, now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together,
And let their heirs, God, if thy will be so,
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
35 With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days!
Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,
That would reduce these bloody days again,
And make poor England weep in streams of blood!
Let them not live to taste this land's increase,
40 That would with treason wound this fair land's peace.
Now civil wounds are stopped, peace lives again.
That she may long live here, God say amen.

Exeunt

RICHMOND

Great God of heaven, say amen to all of this! But tell me, is
young George Stanley still alive?

STANLEY

My lord, he is alive, and safe in Leicester, where we can now
go, if you'd like.


RICHMOND

What noblemen have been killed on either side?


STANLEY

John--the Duke of Norfolk; Lord Walter Ferrers; Sir Robert
Brakenbury; and Sir William Brandon.

RICHMOND

Bury them in a manner appropriate to their social rank.
Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers who fled, if they'll return
and submit to me. And then--as I swore I would--I will marry
Elizabeth , uniting the York and Lancaster families. God,
smile upon this fair union now, after frowning so long upon
the hatred between the two families. What traitor hears me
and doesn't agree? England has been crazy for a long time,
and injured herself. Brothers have blindly shed their
brothers' blood. Fathers have impulsively slaughtered their
own sons. Sons have been compelled to butcher their
fathers. All this divided York and Lancaster even more,
when they were already ominously divided. Oh, but now let
Richmond and Elizabeth--the true heirs of each royal
house--be joined together in holy marriage! And if God wills
it, let their heirs enrich the future with peace, plenty, and
beautiful, prosperous days! Gracious God, may you blunt
the sharpness of traitors' swords and anyone who would
bring back these violent days to make poor England weep
tears of blood! If any would try to wound this land's fair
peace with treason, then don't let them live to enjoy its
prosperity. Now civil wounds are bandaged and can heal,
and peace lives again. Long may she live here. Let God say
amen!

They all exit.

 Richmond will marry King Edward
and Queen Elizabeth's daughter
Elizabeth, not to be confused with
Queen Elizabeth herself.

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