

Act 1 Scene 1

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 loured 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 barbed 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,
15 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

RICHARD, Duke of Gloucester, enters alone.

RICHARD

Now all of my family's troubles have come to a glorious end, thanks to my brother, King Edward IV. All the clouds that threatened the York family have vanished and turned to sunshine. Now we wear the wreaths of victory on our heads. We've taken off our armor and weapons and hung them up as decorations. Instead of hearing trumpets call us to battle, we dance at parties. We get to wear easy smiles on our faces rather than the grim expressions of war. Instead of charging toward our enemies on armored horses, we dance for our ladies in their chambers, accompanied by sexy songs on the lute. But I'm not made to be a seducer, or to make faces at myself in the mirror. I was badly made and don't have the looks to strut my stuff in front of pretty sluts. I've been cheated of a nice body and face, or even normal proportions. I am deformed, spit out from my mother's womb prematurely and so badly formed that dogs bark at me as I limp by them. I'm left with nothing to do in this weak, idle peacetime, unless I want to look at my lumpy shadow in the sun and sing about that.

That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
25 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,
30 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 mewed 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

Since I can't amuse myself by being a lover, I've decided to become a villain. I've set dangerous plans in motion, using lies, drunken prophecies, and stories about dreams to set my brother Clarence and the king against each other. If King Edward is as honest and fair-minded as I am deceitful and cruel, then Clarence is going to be locked away in prison today because of a prophecy that "[G](#)" will murder Edward's children. Oh, time to hide what I'm thinking—here comes Clarence.

CLARENCE enters, surrounded by guards, with BRAKENBURY.

Good afternoon, brother. Why are you surrounded by these armed guards?

CLARENCE

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

RICHARD

Upon what cause?

CLARENCE

Because my name is George.

RICHARD

Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours.
He should, for that, commit your godfathers.
O, belike his majesty hath some intent
50 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
As yet I do not. But, as I can learn,
He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
55 And from the crossrow plucks the letter G,
And says a wizard told him that by "G"
His issue disinherited should be.
And for my name of George begins with G,
It follows in his thought that I am he.
60 These, as I learn, and such like toys as these
Have moved his Highness to commit me now.

His majesty is so concerned about my personal safety that he has ordered them to conduct me to the [Tower](#).

RICHARD

You're being arrested? Why?

CLARENCE

Because my name is George.

RICHARD

That's not your fault! He should imprison the person who named you, instead. Maybe the king is sending you to the Tower to have you renamed. But, really, what's going on, Clarence? Can you tell me?

CLARENCE

I'll tell you as soon as I know, Richard, because at this point I have no idea. All I've been able to find out is that our brother the king has been listening to prophecies and dreams. He picked out the letter "G" from the alphabet and said a wizard told him that "G" will take the throne away from his children. He thinks "G" is me. I've learned that this, along with other frivolous reasons like it, is what prompted the king to send me to prison.

RICHARD

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

70 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
That trudge betwixt the king and Mistress Shore.
Heard ye not what an humble suppliant
75 Lord Hastings was to her for his delivery?

RICHARD

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

RICHARD

Well, this is what happens when men let themselves be ruled
by women. The king isn't the one sending you to the Tower,
Clarence. It's his wife, Lady Grey, who got him to do this.
Remember how she and her brother, Anthony Woodville,
made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower? Hastings was just
released. We're not safe, Clarence, we're not safe.

CLARENCE

By God, I think the only people who are safe are the queen's
own relatives and the late-night messengers the king uses to
fetch his mistress, Mistress Shore. Did you hear how Lord
Hastings had to beg the queen to be freed?

RICHARD

Hastings got his freedom by bowing down to that goddess.
And I'll tell you what. If we want to stay in the king's good
graces, we're going have to act like the [mistress's](#) servants, too.
Ever since our brother made them gentlewomen, Mistress
Shore and the queen have become mighty busybodies in our
kingdom.

Are mighty gossips in this monarchy.

BRAKENBURY

I beseech your Graces both to pardon me.

85 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.

90 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.
We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue,
95 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.

RICHARD

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

BRAKENBURY

I beg your pardon, my lords, but the king gave me orders that
no one, however high in rank, should speak privately to
Clarence.

RICHARD

All right. If you like, Brakenbury, you can listen to anything we
say. We're not saying anything treasonous, man. We say the
king is wise and good, and his noble queen is getting old,
pretty, and not jealous. And that Mr. Shore's wife has nice feet,
cherry lips, pretty eyes, and a very pleasant way of expressing
herself. And, finally, that the queen's relatives have all been
elevated in rank. What do you think? Is there anything
inaccurate in that?

BRAKENBURY

I have nothing to do with what you're talking about, my lord.

RICHARD

"Nothing to do" with Mrs. Shore! I tell you, mister, there's only
one man who gets to do "[nothing](#)," with her and not be
punished for it. Everyone else had better keep their "nothings"
to themselves.

BRAKENBURY

What one, my lord?

RICHARD

Her husband, knave. Wouldst thou betray me?

BRAKENBURY

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

CLARENCE

105 We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.

RICHARD

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

CLARENCE

I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

RICHARD

Well, your imprisonment shall not be long.

BRAKENBURY

Who is that, my lord?

RICHARD

Her husband, you rascal. Are you going to get me in trouble?

BRAKENBURY

I beg your [Grace](#) to pardon me, and now please stop talking to
Clarence.

CLARENCE

We know you have a job to do, Brakenbury, and we'll do what
you say.

RICHARD

We are required to serve the queen, and we must obey her.
Farewell, brother. I will go to the king and do whatever you
want me to, even if it's to call my brother's wife "sister," in order
to set you free. But just so you know, I am very angry about
how our own brother has treated you, angrier than you can
imagine.

CLARENCE

It doesn't make either of us happy, I know.

RICHARD

115 I will deliver you or else lie for you.

Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE

I must perforce. Farewell.

Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and guard

RICHARD

Go tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return.

Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so

120 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

Good time of day unto my gracious lord.

RICHARD

As much unto my good Lord Chamberlain.

125 Well are you welcome to the open air.

How hath your lordship brooked imprisonment?

HASTINGS

With patience, noble lord, as prisoners must.

Well, your imprisonment won't last long. I will either get you out, lying if I have to, or stay in prison in your place. In the meantime, be patient.

CLARENCE

I have no choice. Goodbye.

CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and the guards exit.

RICHARD

Go walk the path that you will never return from. Dumb, honest Clarence. I love you so much that I'll send your soul to heaven very soon—if heaven will accept anything from me, that is. But who's coming? The newly released Hastings?

HASTINGS enters.

HASTINGS

Good afternoon, my dear lord!

RICHARD

The same to you, my lord! Welcome to the open air again. How did you tolerate prison?

HASTINGS

But I shall live, my lord, to give them thanks
That were the cause of my imprisonment.

RICHARD

130 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

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

RICHARD

135 What news abroad?

HASTINGS

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

RICHARD

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

HASTINGS

With patience, noble lord, as prisoners must. But I will live to
thank those who sent me there.

RICHARD

No doubt, no doubt. And so will Clarence, for your enemies are
his enemies, and they have gotten the upper hand of him as
well as of you.

HASTINGS

It's a shame that we eagles are caged up while the vultures are
free to do whatever they please.

RICHARD

What's the news abroad?

HASTINGS

No news as bad as the news at home: The king is sickly, weak,
and depressed, and his doctors are very afraid he's going to
die

RICHARD

Now, by George, that really is terrible news. Oh, the king has
abused his body with bad habits for a long time, and it's finally
taking its toll on him. Very sad. Where is he, in his bed?

HASTINGS

He is.

RICHARD

145 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.
I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence
With lies well steeled with weighty arguments,
150 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,
And leave the world for me to bustle in.
For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
155 What though I killed her husband and her father?
The readiest way to make the wench amends
Is to become her husband and her father;
The which will I, not all so much for love
As for another secret close intent
160 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.
When they are gone, then must I count my gains.

Exit

He is.

RICHARD

You go ahead, and I will follow you.

HASTINGS exits.

The king won't live, I hope. But he'd better not die till Clarence is sent packing to heaven. I'll go see the king and, with carefully argued lies, get him to hate Clarence even more than he already does. If my plan succeeds, Clarence doesn't have another day to live. Then God's free to send King Edward to heaven, too, and leave me the world to run around in! I'll marry the earl of Warwick's youngest daughter, Lady Anne. So what if I killed her husband and her father? The best way to make up for the girl's losses is to become what she's lost: a husband and a father. So that's what I'll do, not because I love her but because I'll get something out of it. But I'm running ahead of myself. Clarence is still alive; Edward is not only alive, he's king. Only when they're dead can I start to count my gains.

He exits.

Act 1 Scene 2

Enter the corse 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,
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

The corpse of KING HENRY VI is carried in on a bier , followed by Lady ANNE, dressed in mourning clothes, and armed guards.

ANNE

Set down your honorable load, men, if there is ever any honor in being dead. I want to mourn the cruel death of this good man. Look at the noble king's poor cold body—the measly remains of the Lancaster family.

They put down the bier.

His royal blood has drained right out of him. I hope I can talk to your ghost, Henry, without breaking church laws. I want you to hear my sorrow. My *husband* was murdered by the same man who stabbed you. My tears now fall into the holes where your life leaked out. I curse the man who made these holes. I curse the man's heart who had the heart to stab you. And I curse the man's blood who shed your blood. I want the man who made me suffer by killing you to face a more terrible end than I could wish on spiders, toads, and all the poisonous, venomous things things alive. If he ever has a child, let it be born prematurely, and let it look like a monster—so ugly and unnatural that the sight of it frightens its own mother.

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

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

And if he ever has a wife, let her be more miserable when he dies than I am now. Guards, let's continue on to Chertsey monastery, carrying this holy burden you picked up at St. Paul's monastery.

They pick up the bier.

When it gets too heavy, rest, and I'll lament over King Henry's corse some more.

RICHARD enters.

RICHARD

Halt, corpse bearers, and put down your load.

ANNE

What wicked magician has conjured up this devil to interrupt this sacred burial rite?

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**RICHARD**

Villains, set down the corpse, or I'll make a corpse of you.

GENTLEMAN

My lord, stand back and let the coffin pass.

RICHARD

Rude dog! Stop when I command you to! And put up your weapon so it's not pointing at my chest, or I'll strike you to the ground and trample on you, you beggar, for being so bold.

They put down the bier.

ANNE

(to the gentlemen and guards) What, are you trembling? You're all afraid of him? Well, I can't blame you. You're only human, after all, and mortals can't stand to look at the devil. (to RICHARD) Begone, you dreadful servant of hell. You only had power over my father-in-law's body; you can't have his soul. So get out.

RICHARD

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

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 exclaims.
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!—
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 deeds, 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 butcherèd!

RICHARD

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

Ugly devil, for God's sake, get out of here and leave us alone.
You have made the happy world into your hell, filling it with
cursing cries and lamentations. If you enjoy looking at your
awful deeds, take a look at this noteworthy example of your
butcheries.

She points to the corpse.

Oh, gentlemen, look, look! Dead Henry's wounds have opened
up and are bleeding again! —Shame on you, you deformed
lump. It's your presence that draws out this blood from his
empty veins. Your inhuman and unnatural actions have
provoked this unnatural flood of blood. Oh God, who made this
blood, revenge his death! Oh earth, which soaks up this blood,
revenge his death! Either let heaven send lightning to strike the
murderer dead or let the earth open wide and devour him, as it
does this good king's blood.

RICHARD

Dear woman, you don't know the rules of charity. When faced
with bad, you're supposed to turn it into good, and when
subject to curses, you're supposed to convert them into
blessings.

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 supposèd 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 cursèd 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.

ANNE

Villain, you don't know the laws of God or of man. Even the fiercest wild animal has some touch of pity.

RICHARD

If I know nothing about pity, that must mean I'm not an animal.

ANNE

It's amazing to hear a devil speak the truth!

RICHARD

It's even stranger when an angel is so angry. Divine, perfect woman, give me a chance to prove in detail that I'm innocent of the evils you accuse me of.

ANNE

Contagious infection of humanity, give me a chance to condemn you for the evils I know you've committed.

RICHARD

You who are beautiful beyond words, calm down and let me explain myself.

ANNE

You who are wicked beyond belief, the only "explanation" I'll accept from you is for you to hang yourself.

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,
The which thou once didst bend against her breast,

RICHARD

Such an expression of despair would only prove that I was guilty.

ANNE

Maybe, but if you killed yourself, it would also show that you felt some guilt for killing others.

RICHARD

Let's say I didn't kill them.

ANNE

Then you might as well say they're not dead. But they are dead, and you killed them, you slave of the devil.

RICHARD

I did not kill your husband.

ANNE

Well, then he must be alive.

RICHARD

No, he is dead. Edward killed him.

ANNE

You're lying. Queen Margaret saw your sword steaming with his blood. It was the same sword you almost killed her with—and you would have killed her if my brothers hadn't fought you off.

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 holp to send him thither,
For he was fitter for that place than earth.

RICHARD

She provoked me with her lying mouth, accusing me of crimes
I didn't commit.

ANNE

No, what provoked you was your own bloody mind, which
never thinks about anything but butchering. You killed this
king, didn't you?

RICHARD

Yes, I'll grant you that.

ANNE

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

RICHARD

That will please God, who has him now.

ANNE

He is in heaven, where you will never go.

RICHARD

Let him thank me, who helped him get there. He's better suited
to be there than here.

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

I know so. But, gentle Lady Anne,
¹²⁰ 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,
As blameful as the executioner?

ANNE

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

RICHARD

Yes, and one other place, if you'll only let me name it.

ANNE

Some dungeon.

RICHARD

Your bedroom.

ANNE

There is no rest to be had in any bedroom where you are!

RICHARD

Exactly, madam, until I sleep with you.

ANNE

I [hope](#) you're right.

RICHARD

I know I am. But, gentle Lady Anne, let's stop this rapid-fire argument and move more slowly. Isn't the person who caused the untimely deaths of these two [Plantagenets](#), Henry and Edward, as much to blame as the person who actually executed the murders?

ANNE

125 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,
So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

ANNE

130 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.
As all the world is cheerèd by the sun,
135 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**ANNE**

You're both those people—responsible for both cause and effect.

RICHARD

Your beauty caused what I did. It haunted me in my sleep. I would have killed the whole world just to be able spend one hour next to you.

ANNE

If I believed you, murderer, I would take my nails and scratch that beauty right off my cheeks.

RICHARD

I couldn't stand to see you destroy your beauty; you won't touch it as long as I'm standing next to you. Just as everyone becomes cheerful from the sun, I'm cheered up by your looks. They are my daylight, my life.

ANNE

Then I hope night shadows your day, and death takes your life!

RICHARD

Don't damn yourself. You, fair lady, are both my day and my life.

ANNE

I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

RICHARD

It is a quarrel most unnatural

140 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

He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband

Did it to help thee to a better husband.

ANNE

145 His better doth not breathe upon the earth.

RICHARD

He lives that loves thee better than he could.

ANNE

Name him.

RICHARD

Plantagenet.

ANNE

Why, that was he.

I wish I were, so I could deprive you of both day and life.

RICHARD

It's strange that you want to take revenge on the person who loves you.

ANNE

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

RICHARD

The man who killed your husband, dear lady, only did it to help you get a better husband.

ANNE

There is no better one on earth.

RICHARD

Wrong. There is a man who loves you better than your husband could.

ANNE

Name him.

RICHARD

Plantagenet.

ANNE

Yes, that's my husband's name.

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

150 Would it were mortal poison for thy sake.

RICHARD

Never came poison 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

155 Would they were basilisks to strike thee dead.

RICHARD

RICHARD

Someone else has the same name, but he's a better man.

ANNE

Where is this man?

RICHARD

Here.

ANNE spits at him.

Why do you spit at me?

ANNE

If only I could spit poison.

RICHARD

Poison never came from such a sweet place.

ANNE

Poison never landed on such an ugly toad. Get out of my sight!
You're poisoning my eyes.

RICHARD

Your beautiful eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine with love.

ANNE

I wish my eyes were [basilisks](#), so they could strike you 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.

160 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,

165 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;

170 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,

175 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,
Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,

I wish they were, so that I could die right now, because, at this point, I live a living death. Your eyes have made me cry, shamefully, like a child. I never cried before this. I didn't cry when my father, York, and my brother Edward both wept at the death of my brother Rutland, whom Clifford slaughtered. And when your warrior-father recounted the sad story of my father's death, pausing to sob twenty times in the course of the story so that all the bystanders ended up dripping tears like trees in a rainstorm—even then, I refused to cry. But your beauty has made me cry until I couldn't see. I never tried to win over a friend or enemy with sweet words. I'm too proud for that. But if your beauty is the reward for sweet talk, I'll talk.

ANNE looks at him with disgust.

Don't curl your lips in scorn. They were made for kissing, not for contempt. If your vengeful heart can't forgive me, here—take my sword and bury it in my heart so that my soul, which

180 Which if thou please to hide in this true breast
And let the soul forth that adoreth 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

Nay, do not pause; for I did kill King Henry—
185 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

Arise, dissembler. Though I wish thy death,
190 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.

adores you, can be free. I open myself to being stabbed. In fact, I beg for death on my knees.

He opens his shirt to expose his chest, and she points the sword toward it.

No, don't pause, because I *did* kill King Henry, though it was your beauty that made me do it. Go ahead. And it *was* me who stabbed young Edward, though it was your heavenly face that set me to work.

ANNE lets the sword drop.

Take up the sword again, or take me up.

ANNE

Get up, liar. Though I wish you were dead, I'm not going to be the one to kill you.

RICHARD

(rising) Then tell me to kill myself, and I will.

ANNE

I have already.

RICHARD

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

ANNE

I would I knew thy heart.

RICHARD

'Tis figured in my tongue.

ANNE

I fear me both are false.

RICHARD

200 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

But shall I live in hope?

You said it when you were furious. Say it again—just one word, and my hand, which killed your lover out of love, will kill your far truer lover. You will be an accessory to both crimes.

ANNE

I wish I knew what was in your heart.

RICHARD

I've told you.

ANNE

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

RICHARD

Then no man has ever been honest.

ANNE

Well, then, put your sword away.

RICHARD

Tell me that you'll accept my love.

ANNE

You'll know about that later.

RICHARD

But can I have some hope?

ANNE

205 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

Look, how this ring encompasseth finger;
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart.
210 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

What is it?

RICHARD

215 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

ANNE

I'd like to think all men have some hope.

RICHARD

Please wear this ring.

ANNE

I'll take the ring, but don't assume I'm giving you anything in return.

He places the ring on her finger.

RICHARD

See how my ring encircles your finger? That's how your heart embraces my poor heart. Wear both the ring and my heart, because both are yours. And if I, your poor devoted servant, may ask you for one small favor, you will guarantee my happiness forever.

ANNE

What's that?

RICHARD

Please leave it to me to take care of the burial, as I have more reason to mourn than you do. Meanwhile go to my estate at Crosby Place. After I have performed the solemn burial rites for this noble king at Chertsey monastery and cried with regret at

At Chertsey monast'ry this noble king
220 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

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

RICHARD

Bid me farewell.

ANNE

'Tis more than you deserve;
But since you teach me how to flatter you,
230 Imagine I have 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.

his grave, I'll hurry to meet you. For various reasons that must remain secret, please do this for me.

ANNE

I'll do it with all my heart. I'm happy to see you've come to repent for what you've done. Tressel and Berkeley, come with me.

RICHARD

Say goodbye to me.

ANNE

It's more than you deserve. But since you're already teaching me how to flatter you, pretend I've said goodbye already.

ANNE and two others exit.

RICHARD

Sirs, take up the corpse.

GENTLEMAN

Toward Chertsey, noble lord?

RICHARD

No, to the Whitefriars monastery. Wait for me there.

Exeunt all but RICHARD

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
235 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,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
240 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?
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
245 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 Lovellier gentleman,
250 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
255 And made her widow to a woeful bed?
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?

Everyone exits except RICHARD.

Has anyone ever courted a woman in this state of mind? And has anyone ever won her, as I've done? I'll get her, but I won't keep her long. What! I, who killed her husband and his father, managed to win her over when her hatred for me was strongest, while she's swearing her head off, sobbing her eyes out, and the bloody corpse, proof of why she should hate me, right in front of her? She has God, her conscience, and my own acts against me, and I have nothing on my side but the ugly devil and my false looks. And yet, against all odds, I win her over! Ha! Has she already forgotten her brave husband, Prince Edward, whom I stabbed on the battlefield three months ago in my anger? The world will never again produce such a sweet, lovely gentleman. He was graced with lots of natural gifts, he was young, valiant, wise, and no doubt meant to be king.

And yet she cheapens herself by turning her gaze on me, who cut her sweet prince's life short and made her a widow? On me, though I am barely half the man that Edward was? On me, though I am limping and deformed? I bet I've been wrong

On me, that halts and am misshapen thus?
My dukedom to a beggarly denier,
I do mistake my person all this while!
260 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.
265 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,
270 That I may see my shadow as I pass.

Exit

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.

about myself all this time. Even though I don't see it, this lady thinks I'm a marvelously good-looking man. Time to buy myself a mirror and employ a few dozen tailors to dress me up in the current fashions. Since I'm suddenly all the rage, it will be worth the cost. But first, I'll dump this fellow in his grave, then return to my love weeping with grief. Come out, beautiful sun—until I've bought a mirror to admire my reflection in, I'll watch my shadow as I stroll along.

He exits.

Act 1 Scene 3

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

RIVERS

Be patient, madam. I'm sure his majesty will recover his health soon.

GREY

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?

RIVERS

No other harm but loss of such a lord.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The loss of such a lord includes all harms.

GREY

The heavens have blessed you with a goodly son
10 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.

You'll only make him worse with all your worry. For God's sake,
let people comfort you. Then you'll be able to cheer *him* up.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

If he were dead, what would happen to me?

GREY

Nothing more than that you'd lose your husband.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Losing *this* husband will cause me all sorts of harm.

GREY

You have been blessed with an excellent son, who will comfort
you when the king is dead.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But he's young, and as long as he's too young to become king,
Richard, the duke of Gloucester, has power over him. Richard
loves neither me nor any of you.

RIVERS

Has it been decided that Richard will be [Protector](#) ?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

It's been decided, though not yet officially announced. But
that's what will happen if the king dies.

The duke of BUCKINGHAM and Lord STANLEY, Earl of Derby,

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?

enter.

GREY

Here come Lord Buckingham and Lord Derby.

BUCKINGHAM

(*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) Good afternoon, your royal Highness!

STANLEY

I hope God makes you happy again, like you once were.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My good Lord Derby, the countess Richmond would hardly say "amen" to your kind words. But don't worry. I don't hold it against you, even though she's your wife, that she's so unfriendly and arrogant.

STANLEY

Please don't believe the false rumors you've heard about her feelings toward you, or if they're true, then forgive her, since she's only acting that way because she's sick, not because she hates you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Did you see the king today, Lord 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?

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?

STANLEY

Yes, the duke of Buckingham and I have just returned from visiting him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What are the chances of his getting better, lords?

BUCKINGHAM

Madam, keep up hope. He seems cheerful.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God give him health. Did you talk with him?

BUCKINGHAM

Yes, madam. He wants to patch things up between Richard and your brothers, and between your brothers and Hastings. He has summoned them all.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I wish I could believe you that all was well! But I'm worried that things can only go downhill from here.

RICHARD, HASTINGS, and DORSET enter.

RICHARD

They're out to get me, and I won't stand for it! Which of you has been complaining to the king that I don't like them? By God, whoever is worrying the king with these lies doesn't love him

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

very much. Just because I don't know how to flatter and act nice, to smile in men's faces and, as soon as their backs are turned, spread rumors about them, to bow and scrape like a nobleman trained in the French court, people have to think I'm their enemy. Can't a plain man live and do no harm to anyone without being taken advantage of by a bunch of slick, sneaky lowlifes?

RIVERS

Which of us are you referring to?

RICHARD

You, who are neither honest nor good. When did I ever do you any harm? Or you? Or you? Or any of you? Damn you all! The king—whom I hope God will protect better than you would like—can't get a minute's rest without you bothering him with your outrageous complaints.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Brother, you've made a mistake. The king himself noticed your hatred toward my children, my brothers, and myself. No one had to point it out to him—it's obvious. He asked people to visit

That in your outward actions shows itself
Against my children, brothers, and myself,
Makes him to send, that he may learn the ground.

RICHARD

70 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

Come, come, we know your meaning, brother Gloucester.
75 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,
Myself disgraced, and the nobility
80 Held in contempt, while great promotions
Are daily given to enoble those
That scarce some two days since were worth a noble.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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

him. He wanted to find out the reason for your ill will, so he could do something about it.

RICHARD

I can't tell what's going on. The world has become so bad that now little wrens have settled where eagles used to roost. Since every peasant has been made into a nobleman, many noblemen have been dragged down to the level of peasants.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Come, come, I know what you're referring to, Richard. You resent my friends' rise in society, and my own. Let's hope we never need your help for anything.

RICHARD

Meanwhile, we're the ones who need you. My brother is imprisoned because of you, I am disgraced, and the nobility are held in contempt while those who two days ago weren't worth a dime have suddenly been promoted.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

By the Lord who raised me to this weighty post from the happy and carefree life I used to enjoy, I promise you I never did anything to get the king to turn against the duke of Clarence. In

An earnest advocate to plead for him.
My lord, you do me shameful injury
Falsely to draw me in these vile suspects.

RICHARD

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

RIVERS

She may, my lord, for—

RICHARD

She may, Lord Rivers. Why, who knows not so?
She may do more, sir, than denying that.
95 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

What, marry, may she?

RICHARD

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

fact, I've always been on his side and have pleaded for him. My lord, you're doing me a huge injustice to suggest otherwise.

RICHARD

Oh, and I'll bet you'll also deny you were responsible for Lord Hastings's recent stay in prison.

RIVERS

She may deny that, my lord, because—

RICHARD

She may, Lord Rivers? Everybody knows she *may*. She may do a lot more than that, sir. She may help you to get many nice promotions, and then deny she helped you, claiming you won them on your own merits. What can't she do? She could even
—

RIVERS

She could even what?

RICHARD

She could even what? She could marry a king, a bachelor, a handsome young lad. Certainly, your grandmother had a worse match.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My Lord of Gloucester, I have too long borne
Your blunt upbraidings and your bitter scoffs.
105 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,
To be so baited, scorned, and stormèd at.

Enter old QUEEN MARGARET, apart from others

110 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

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) What, threat you me with telling of
the king?
Tell him, and spare not. Look, what I have said,
115 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

(aside) Out, devil! I do remember them too well:
Thou killed'st my husband Henry in the Tower,

My lord of Gloucester, I have suffered your blunt upbraidings
and your bitterness toward me for too long. By God, I will tell
the king about these taunts. I would rather be a country
serving maid than a great queen if it meant I could escape
your scorn and constant harassment.

Old QUEEN MARGARET enters without being seen.

I've had very little joy as England's queen.

QUEEN MARGARET

(speaking so no one else can hear) God, give her even less joy, I
beg you! Elizabeth, your honor, your high rank, and your
position as queen are all owed to me.

RICHARD

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) What! You're threatening to tell the
king? Go ahead, and don't spare a single detail. Look, what I
have said to you I will repeat in the presence of the king. If it
means I'll be sent to the Tower, so be it. It's time for me to
speak the truth. All the pains I took on King Edward's behalf
have been forgotten.

QUEEN MARGARET

(speaking so no one else can hear) You devil! I remember these
pains all too well. You killed my husband, Henry, in the Tower

120 And Edward, my poor son, at Tewkesbury.

RICHARD

(*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.

125 To royalize his blood, I spent mine own.

QUEEN MARGARET

(*aside*) Ay, and much better blood than his or thine.

RICHARD

(*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
130 In Margaret's battle at Saint Albans slain?
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.

and my poor son, Edward, at Tewksbury.

RICHARD

(*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) Before you were queen—in fact, before your husband was king—I was a packhorse for his great affairs, a weeder-out of his proud enemies, a generous rewarder of his friends. In order to make his blood royal, I spent my own blood.

QUEEN MARGARET

(*speaking so no one else can hear*) Yes, and you spent **better** blood than his or your own.

RICHARD

(*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) In all that time, you and your first husband, Sir John Grey, were fighting for the Lancasters.—And so were you, Rivers.—Elizabeth, wasn't your first husband killed while fighting in Queen Margaret's army at Saint Alban's? In case you've forgotten, I want to remind you where you come from and what side you were on before you arrived here. And I want you to remember whom I fought for, who I have been, and who I am.

QUEEN MARGARET

(*speaking so no one else can hear*) You were a murderous villain, and you still are.

RICHARD

135 (to QUEEN ELIZABETH) Poor Clarence did forsake his father Warwick,
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 mewed up.
140 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,
Thou cacodemon! There thy kingdom is.

RIVERS

145 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**RICHARD**

(to ELIZABETH) Poor [Clarence](#) abandoned his father-in-law, a Lancaster, and broke his own oath—may Jesus forgive him!—

QUEEN MARGARET

(speaking so no one else can hear) May God take revenge on him!

RICHARD

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) —in order to fight on Edward's side to help him win the crown. And now he is rewarded by being thrown in prison! I wish to God my heart were made of stone, like Edward's is. Or I wish Edward's were soft and full of feeling, as mine is, so that he would let Clarence go. I am too childish, too innocent, for this world.

QUEEN MARGARET

(speaking so no one else can hear) Hurry to hell, then, and leave the world alone, you demon! Hell is where your kingdom is.

RIVERS

My Lord of Gloucester, in those busy days, which you're bringing up now to prove we're your enemies, we followed the lawful king. If you were king, we would do the same.

RICHARD

If I should be? I had rather be a peddler.

150 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
That I enjoy, being the queen thereof.

QUEEN MARGARET

155 *(aside)* As 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
In sharing that which you have pilled from me!
160 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

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

QUEEN MARGARET

165 But repetition of what thou hast marred.

If I were king? I'd rather be a peddler. The thought of being king doesn't appeal to me in the least.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You're right to imagine that being this country's leader brings no pleasure. As queen, I have felt none.

QUEEN MARGARET

(speaking so no one else can hear) No pleasure for the queen, indeed: I am the real queen, and the experience is completely joyless. I can no longer hold my tongue.

She moves forward so that everyone can see her.

Hear me, you wrangling pirates. You're quarreling over what doesn't even belong to you—you stole it from me! Which of you does not tremble when you see me? If you aren't trembling because you know I am queen and you are my subjects, then you're shaking because you threw me from the throne! *(to RICHARD)* Oh highborn villain, do not turn away!

RICHARD

Ugly, wrinkled witch, what are you doing here?

QUEEN MARGARET

That will I make before I let thee go.

RICHARD

Wert thou not banishèd on pain of death?

QUEEN MARGARET

I was, but I do find more pain in banishment
Than death can yield me here by my abode.

170 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,
And all the pleasures you usurp are mine.

RICHARD

175 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
Steeped in the faultless blood of pretty Rutland—
180 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.

Only describing what you have ruined. Or at least that's what I plan to do before I let you go.

RICHARD

Weren't you banished on pain of death?

QUEEN MARGARET

I was. But I felt more pain from exile than I would have from being dead here at home. You, Richard, owe me a husband and a son. The rest of you owe me a kingdom. And all of you owe me allegiance. The sorrow that I feel actually belongs to you, and the high life you enjoy actually belongs to me. You stole it from me.

RICHARD

The curse my noble [warrior-father](#) laid on you when you set a paper crown on his head just before slaying him has finally borne fruit. Your scorn for him was so shocking that he cried rivers.

To stop up his tears, you handed him a rag soaked with the blood of his own child. God, not us, is responsible for punishing you for your bloody deed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God is just. He rewards the innocent.

HASTINGS

O, 'twas the foulest deed to slay that babe,
185 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

What, were you snarling all before I came,
190 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 Lovely Edward's death,
Their kingdom's loss, my woeful banishment,
195 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,
As ours by murder to make him a king.

QUEEN MARGARET

200 (to QUEEN ELIZABETH)

HASTINGS

Oh, killing that child was the dirtiest, most merciless deed there ever was!

RIVERS

Tyrants themselves wept when they heard about it.

DORSET

Everyone understood there would be a heavy payback.

BUCKINGHAM

Even [Northumberland](#) wept to see it.

QUEEN MARGARET

What, were you all snarling before I arrived, ready to catch each other by the throat like dogs, but now that I'm here, you turn your hatred toward me? Did the duke of York's terrible curse have so much weight with God that God repaid him not only with Henry's death and my lovely Edward's death but with the loss of their kingdom and with my banishment, too? All because of what happened to that brat Rutland? If curses can pierce the clouds and enter heaven that easily, then open up, thick clouds, and listen to my curses!

QUEEN MARGARET

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.
Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
205 Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self.

Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's death
And see another, as I see thee now,
Decked in thy rights, as thou art stalled in mine.
Long die thy happy days before thy death,
210 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
Was stabbed with bloody daggers. God I pray Him
215 That none of you may live his natural age,
But by some unlooked accident cut off.

RICHARD

Have done thy charm, thou hateful, withered hag.

QUEEN MARGARET

And leave out thee? Stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me.
If heaven have any grievous plague in store
220 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.

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) Though your king did not die in battle, let him die from overindulging his appetites, as my husband was murdered to make your husband king. May your son Edward, who is currently the prince of Wales, die young and violently, as payback for the death of my son Edward, the former prince of Wales. And may you outlive your glory just as miserably as I have, to make up for taking *my* position as queen. May you live long enough to mourn your children's deaths and watch another woman enjoy the throne, as I now watch you. Let your happy days die long before you do. After many extended hours of grief, may you die neither a mother, a wife, nor England's queen. Rivers, Dorset, and Lord Hastings, you all stood by as my son was stabbed. For his sake, I pray to God that none of you die a natural death but have your lives cut short by some unforeseen accident.

RICHARD

Enough of your magic spells, you hateful, withered hag.

QUEEN MARGARET

And leave you out? Don't move, dog. It's your turn now. If heaven has any plagues beyond what I can drum up, let it wait until your *sins* are piled high and then hurl them down on you, you destroyer of a whole world of peace! May conscience eat away at your soul constantly. May you suspect your true friends of being traitors and take the worst traitors as your

The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul.

225 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
Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils.

QUEEN MARGARET

230 Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog,
Thou that wast sealed in thy nativity
The slave of nature and the son of hell,
Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb,
Thou loathèd issue of thy father's loins,
235 Thou rag of honor, thou detested—

RICHARD

Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Richard!

RICHARD

Ha?

QUEEN MARGARET

I call thee not.

RICHARD

closest friends. May you never sleep a wink except to dream of a hell full of ugly devils.

QUEEN MARGARET

You deformed, prematurely born, rooting hog, you evil birth defect, you insult to your mother's womb, you hated disgrace to your father's sperm, you disgusting—

RICHARD

Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Richard.

RICHARD

Yes?

QUEEN MARGARET

I didn't call you.

RICHARD

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

QUEEN MARGARET

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

RICHARD

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

(to QUEEN MARGARET)

Thus have you breathed your curse against yourself.

QUEEN MARGARET

245 Poor painted queen, vain flourish of my fortune,
Why strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider,
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
250 To help thee curse that poisonous bunch-backed toad.

HASTINGS

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.

I beg your pardon—I thought it was me whom you were calling
all those terrible names.

QUEEN MARGARET

Yes, I was, but I don't want an answer from you. Let me finish
my curse.

RICHARD

I've finished it for you, and it ends in "Margaret."

QUEEN ELIZABETH

He's turned your curse against you, Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Poor imitation queen, why do you align yourself with this
humpbacked spider when he's got you trapped in his deadly
web? Fool! You're sharpening a knife to cut yourself. The day
will come when you'll wish I could help you cast spells against
this poisonous, hunchbacked toad.

HASTINGS

Woman, stop your frantic curses and false prophesies before
we run out of patience and do something bad to you.

QUEEN MARGARET

Shame on you; I've already run out of patience with you all.

RIVERS

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

QUEEN MARGARET

255 To serve me well, you all should do me duty:
Teach me to be your queen, and you my subjects.
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.
260 Your fire-new stamp of honor is scarce current.
O, that your young nobility could judge
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

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

DORSET

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

RICHARD

Ay, and much more; but I was born so high.
Our aerie buildeth in the cedar's top,

RIVERS

If you got what you deserved, you would learn some respect.

QUEEN MARGARET

What I deserve is that you treat me like a queen, and what you deserve is to act like my subjects. Give me what I deserve, and do your duty!

DORSET

(to RIVERS) Don't argue with her. She's crazy.

QUEEN MARGARET

Enough from you, mister, you're being impudent. Unlike those born into nobility, your claim to royalty is so recent that you hardly even know what it means to lose it. People in high positions are shaken by many blasts of wind, and when they fall, they shatter into pieces.

RICHARD

Good advice, indeed. Take it to heart, Dorset.

DORSET

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

RICHARD

Yes, and much more so. But I was born that high. Like an eagle, which builds its nest at the top of a high tree, I play in the wind

And dallies with the wind and scorns the sun.

QUEEN MARGARET

270 And turns the sun to shade. Alas, alas,
Witness my son, now in the shade of death,
Whose bright out-shining beams thy cloudy wrath
Hath in eternal darkness folded up.
Your aerie buildeth in our aerie's nest.

275 O God, that seest it, do not suffer it!
As it was won with blood, lost be it so.

BUCKINGHAM

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

QUEEN MARGARET

Urge neither charity nor shame to me.
(addressing the others)

280 Uncharitably with me have you dealt,
And shamefully my hopes by you are butchered.
My charity is outrage, life my shame,
And in that shame still live my sorrows' rage.

BUCKINGHAM

Have done, have done.

QUEEN MARGARET

285 O princely Buckingham, I'll kiss thy hand
In sign of league and amity with thee.

and am not afraid to look at the sun.

QUEEN MARGARET

But you turn that sun into a shadow. Take my son, for example. He is dead now. You put out his bright life forever. You are building your nest in *our* nest. Oh God who's watching, don't let him get away with this! He won his position violently. Let him lose it that way, too.

BUCKINGHAM

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

QUEEN MARGARET

How dare you talk about kindness or shame. (*to the others*) You have only been unkind to me, and you have shamefully butchered my hopes. My kindness to you is to be outraged at what has happened, and my sad, sad shame is in what you have done to my life.

BUCKINGHAM

Enough, enough.

QUEEN MARGARET

Oh noble Buckingham, I'll kiss your hand to show my friendship and support for you. I wish only good things upon

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

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

QUEEN MARGARET

I will not think but they ascend the sky,
And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace.
(aside to BUCKINGHAM)

295 O Buckingham, take heed of yonder dog!
Look when he fawns, he bites; and when he bites,
His venom tooth will rankle to the death.
Have not to do with him. Beware of him.
Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him,
300 And all their ministers attend on him.

RICHARD

What doth she say, my lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

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?

you and your noble family! Your clothes aren't spattered with my family's blood, and you aren't affected by my curse.

BUCKINGHAM

No one here is affected by your curse, because curses are just words with no power.

QUEEN MARGARET

I think they rise up to heaven and arouse God from his gentle sleep. *(so that only BUCKINGHAM hears)* Oh Buckingham, watch out for that dog, Richard! When he seems to be fawning on you, he's actually about to bite. And his poisonous bite kills. Have nothing to do with him. Beware of him. All the powers of sin, death, and hell are doing his bidding.

RICHARD

What is she saying, my lord?

BUCKINGHAM

Nothing that interests me, my good lord.

QUEEN MARGARET

What, you ignore my kind advice and try to please the devil I'm warning you about? Oh, just remember this another day, when

305 O, but remember this another day,
When he shall split thy very heart with sorrow,
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

310 My hair doth stand an end to hear her curses.

RIVERS

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

RICHARD

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

315 I never did her any, to my knowledge.

RICHARD

Yet you have all the vantage of her wrong.
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;

320 He is franked up to fattening for his pains.

he splits your heart in two with sorrow. Then you'll say poor Margaret was a prophet. Richard will come to hate everyone here, as you will come to hate him—and as God will come to hate you all.

She exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Her curses have made my hair stand on end.

RIVERS

Mine, too. I don't understand why she's not locked up.

RICHARD

I can't blame her. She has been wronged too often. I regret what I have done to hurt her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I never caused her any harm, as far as I know.

RICHARD

But you have all the advantages from the harm done. For my part, I was too eager to do King Edward good. He doesn't even seem to notice now. And look how he's repaid poor Clarence for his loyalty—penned him up like a pig being fattened for

God pardon them that are the cause thereof.

RIVERS

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,
325 For had I cursed now, I had cursed myself.

Enter CATESBY

CATESBY

Madam, his majesty doth call for you,—
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

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

slaughter. God pardon those who are responsible for Clarence's troubles.

RIVERS

That's very virtuous and Christian of you, Richard, to pray for those who have done us harm.

RICHARD

I always pray for them (*to himself*) because "they" are none other than myself. If I cursed Clarence's wrongdoers, I'd be cursing myself.

CATESBY enters.

CATESBY

Madam, his majesty asks for you, and for you, Duke of Gloucester, and for you, my noble lords.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Catesby, we'll be there soon.—Lords, will you come with me?

RIVERS

We will wait on you, your majesty.

Everyone but RICHARD exits.

RICHARD

Incredible. I do the wrong and am the first to start quarrels. What I did in secret I blame on others. I cry about Clarence,

I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I indeed have cast in darkness,
I do beweep to many simple gulls.
335 Namely, to Derby, Hastings, Buckingham,
And tell them 'tis the queen and her allies
That stir the king against the duke my brother.
Now they believe it and withal whet me
To be revenged on Rivers, Dorset, Grey;
340 But then I sigh and, with a piece of scripture,
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
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

345 But, soft! here come my executioners.—
How now, my hardy, stout, resolvèd mates?
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

350 Well thought upon. I have it here about me.
He gives a paper

whom I had imprisoned, in front of these simple fools—namely, Hastings, Derby and Buckingham—and tell them that the queen and her allies roused the king against my brother Clarence. They believe me and urge me to take revenge on Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey. But then I sigh and quote a chunk of the Bible—how God says do good in return for evil. Ha! Dressing my out-and-out wickedness in scraps of Scripture, I look like a saint exactly when I'm most like the devil.

Two MURDERERS enter.

But quiet. Here come the murderers I've hired. How's it going, hardy, reliable friends! Are you going to take care of this thing now?

FIRST MURDERER

We are, my lord. We've come to get the warrant so we can be let into his cell.

RICHARD

Good thinking. I have it on me here. (*he hands over the warrant*) When you're done, go to Crosby Place. But, sirs, do the job fast.

When you have done, repair to Crosby Place.
But, sirs, be sudden in the execution,
Withal obdurate; do not hear him plead,
355 For Clarence is well-spoken and perhaps
May move your hearts to pity if you mark him.

FIRST MURDERER

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

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

MURDERERS

We will, my noble lord.

Exeunt

Enter CLARENCE and KEEPER

KEEPER

Why looks your grace so heavily today?

CLARENCE

And stick to your mission. Don't let him plead for his life,
because Clarence is a good talker and may make you pity him
if you let him get started.

FIRST MURDERER

Tut, tut, my lord, we're not going to stand around chit-chatting.
Talkers aren't good doers. Rest assured that we're going there
to use our hands, not our tongues.

RICHARD

When fools cry, you remain stony. I like you guys. Go straight to
work. Hurry now, get the job done.

MURDERERS

We will, my noble lord.

They all exit.

Act 1 Scene 4

CLARENCE and the KEEPER enter.

KEEPER

Why do you look so depressed today, your Grace?

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.

KEEPER

What was your dream, my lord? I pray you 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,

Oh, I had a miserable night. I had such dark and terrifying dreams that I swear I wouldn't spend another night like that if it guaranteed me a whole lifetime of happy days.

KEEPER

What was your dream? Tell me.

CLARENCE

I thought I had escaped from the Tower and was on a ship to France with my brother Richard, who persuaded me to leave my cabin and walk on deck with him. Looking toward England, we reminisced about the countless frightening experiences we'd had in the wars between the Yorks and the Lancasters. As we were pacing the deck, which was tipping heavily, Richard seemed to stumble, and as I tried to grab hold of him and keep him from falling, he knocked me overboard into the crashing waves. Lord, how painful it was to drown. The sound of the rushing water was terrible, and so were the sights. I saw a thousand shipwrecks, a thousand men whom fish had gnawed to the bone, huge anchors, chunks of gold, heaps of pearls, and precious jewels—all scattered on the bottom of the sea.

25 A 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.

CLARENCE

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.

KEEPER

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.

KEEPER

Awaked you not in this sore agony?

CLARENCE

CLARENCE

Some of the gems had wedged themselves like imitation eyes
into the dead men's skulls. The fake eyes gazed dully at the
bones scattered around.

KEEPER

So you had time as you were dying to look around?

CLARENCE

I thought I did, and I often tried to die. But the terrible water
always held me back. It wouldn't let my soul find its way to air
but smothered it inside my gasping body. My body wanted so
badly to vomit up my spirit that it almost burst.

KEEPER

And didn't you wake up during this terrible 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, renownèd Warwick,
50 Who spake 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

CLARENCE

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 howlèd 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.

KEEPER

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

Oh, no, my dream went on even after I died. In fact, the real nightmare had only just begun. With the help of the grim [ferryman](#) that poets like to write about, my soul crossed the river into the kingdom of endless night.

The first to greet me there was my great [father-in-law](#), the famous earl of Warwick. He cried aloud, "What terrible punishment can this dark realm devise for the oath-breaker Clarence?" And he vanished. Then a ghost like an angel with its hair spattered in blood wandered by, and shrieked,

CLARENCE

"Clarence has arrived—lying, cowardly [Clarence](#), who stabbed me at Tewksbury. Grab him, avenging spirits, and torment him." With that, a legion of ugly demons surrounded me and howled so loudly in my ears that I woke up trembling and for a long time thought I was still in hell.

KEEPER

I'm not surprised it scared you, my lord. It scares me just to hear you talk about 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 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.

KEEPER

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

CLARENCE sleeps

Enter BRAKENBURY the lieutenant

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

CLARENCE

Oh, keeper, keeper, the bad things I've done are finally taking their toll. I did them for Edward's sake—and look how he rewards me.—Oh God, if my prayers don't satisfy you, and you have to avenge the wrongs I've done, at least punish me alone! Please spare my innocent wife and children!—Kind warden, please stay with me for a while. I'm feeling very low, and I need to sleep.

KEEPER

I'll stay, my lord. May God bring you sleep!

CLARENCE sleeps

BRAKENBURY the lieutenant enters.

BRAKENBURY

Sorrow interrupts all hours and seasons. It turns everything around—the night into morning and noon into night. The only glory princes have are their titles.

Instead of the pleasures we think they're enjoying, they experience a whole world of worries. It turns out the only difference between them and peasants is their fame.

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 our commission, and talk no more.

BRAKENBURY reads the paper

BRAKENBURY

90 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.
There lies the duke asleep, and there the keys.

95 *He hands them the keys*

The two MURDERERS enter.

FIRST MURDERER

Ho! Who's there?

BRAKENBURY

What do you want, fellow? And how did you get in here?

SECOND MURDERER

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

BRAKENBURY

That's it? Nothing to add?

FIRST MURDERER

Well, sir, it's better to say little than to be tedious. (*to SECOND MURDERER*) Show him our orders and keep your mouth shut.

BRAKENBURY reads the paper

BRAKENBURY

It orders me to hand the noble duke of Clarence over to you. I won't ask why because I'd rather not know than feel guilty if you're doing something you shouldn't be. Here are the keys, and there is the duke, sleeping. (*he hands them the keys*) I'll go to the king to let him know I've handed my prisoner over to you.

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 and KEEPER

SECOND MURDERER

What, shall I stab him as he sleeps?

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

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

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

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

FIRST MURDERER

105 What, art thou afraid?

SECOND MURDERER

FIRST MURDERER

You may, sir. That's a wise idea. Goodbye.

BRAKENBURY and the KEEPER exit.

SECOND MURDERER

What, should I stab him while he sleeps?

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

When he wakes up! Why, he won't wake up till Judgment Day.

FIRST MURDERER

Okay, so that's when he'll say we stabbed him in his sleep.

SECOND MURDERER

That word "judgment" makes me feel a bit guilty.

FIRST MURDERER

What, are you 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

I thought thou hadst been resolute.

SECOND MURDERER

So I am—to let him live.

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

Nay, I prithee 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

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

FIRST MURDERER

Remember our reward when the deed's done.

SECOND MURDERER

Zounds, he dies! I had forgot the reward.

Not of killing him, because I have a warrant for it, but of being damned for killing him, which no warrant can protect me from.

FIRST MURDERER

I thought you were resolved to do this.

SECOND MURDERER

I am resolved—to let him live.

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

Please, just wait a minute. I'm hoping my holy mood will pass. It usually only lasts about twenty seconds.

FIRST MURDERER

How are you feeling now?

SECOND MURDERER

Actually, I'm still feeling some pangs of conscience.

FIRST MURDERER

Remember the reward we're getting when the deed's done.

SECOND MURDERER

Jesus, let's kill him! I forgot about the reward.

FIRST MURDERER

Where's thy conscience now?

SECOND MURDERER

O, in the duke of Gloucester's purse.

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

'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

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

FIRST MURDERER**FIRST MURDERER**

Where's your conscience now?

SECOND MURDERER

Oh, in the duke of Gloucester's wallet.

FIRST MURDERER

When he opens his wallet to give us our pay, your conscience will fly out?

SECOND MURDERER

It won't matter. Let it fly out. No one will listen to it.

FIRST MURDERER

And what will you do if it returns to you?

SECOND MURDERER

I won't bother with it. Conscience makes a man a coward. If he steals, it accuses him. If he wants to swear, it restrains him. If he sleeps with his neighbor's wife, it exposes him. It blushes, is easily embarrassed, and stages regular uprisings in a man's heart. It's just too much trouble. It once made me return a purse full of money that I found—it turns anyone who treats it decently into a beggar. It has been thrown out of all sorts of towns and cities it visits, and anyone who wants to live well should learn to trust only himself and live without it.

FIRST MURDERER

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

SECOND MURDERER

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

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

145 Strike!

FIRST MURDERER

No, we'll reason with him.

My God, now the thing is at *my* elbow, persuading me not to kill the duke.

SECOND MURDERER

Stop your conscience and don't listen to him. He wants to take over your thoughts and make you sad.

FIRST MURDERER

I'm strong-willed. He won't get the better of me.

SECOND MURDERER

Spoken like a brave man who respects his reputation. Shall we get to work?

FIRST MURDERER

We'll hit him on the head with the handles of our swords, then throw him in the wine barrel in the next room.

SECOND MURDERER

What an excellent idea—he'll soak up the wine!

FIRST MURDERER

Wait a moment. He's waking up.

SECOND MURDERER

Strike!

FIRST MURDERER

No, first let's talk to 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

A man, as you are.

CLARENCE

150 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

How darkly and how deadly dost thou speak!

CLARENCE wakes

CLARENCE

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

SECOND MURDERER

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

CLARENCE

In God's name, who are you?

FIRST MURDERER

A man, like you.

CLARENCE

But not a member of the royal family, like me.

FIRST MURDERER

And you're not loyal, like us.

CLARENCE

Your voice is loud and commanding, but you look like a working man.

FIRST MURDERER

I'm speaking for the king, but I look like myself.

CLARENCE

155 Your eyes do menace me. Why look you pale?
Who sent you hither? Wherfore do you come?

SECOND MURDERER

To, to, to—

CLARENCE

To murder me?

BOTH MURDERERS

Ay, ay.

CLARENCE

160 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

I shall be reconciled to him again.

SECOND MURDERER

165 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?

The things you say scare me! Your eyes look threatening. And why are you so pale? Who sent you here? Why are you here?

SECOND MURDERER

To, to, to—

CLARENCE

To murder me?

BOTH MURDERERS

Yes.

CLARENCE

You barely have the heart to tell me, so you can't possibly have the nerve to do it. Besides, how have I offended you, my friends?

FIRST MURDERER

You didn't offend us, you offended the king.

CLARENCE

He and I will make up.

SECOND MURDERER

Never, my lord. So prepare to die.

CLARENCE

It's your job in life to kill the innocent? What did I do wrong?
Where's the evidence against me? Where's the jury, the judge,

Where is the evidence that doth accuse me?
What lawful quest have given their verdict up
170 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.
I charge you, as you hope to have redemption,
175 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

And he that hath commanded is our king.

CLARENCE

180 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?
Take heed, for He holds vengeance in His hand
185 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.

the lawful proceedings, the verdict? Who pronounced this death sentence before a court of law could even convict me? For you to threaten to kill me is most unlawful. If you hope to have your sins forgiven by Christ's dear blood, which He shed for our terrible sins, you must leave and keep your hands off me. You'll go to Hell for the deed you're planning to do.

FIRST MURDERER

What we do we have been commanded to do.

SECOND MURDERER

And the one who commands us is our king.

CLARENCE

Wrong-headed slaves, the King of kings says in his Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not murder." Will you defy God and obey a man? Be careful. God takes revenge on those who break His laws.

SECOND MURDERER

He does, and now he's taking revenge on you—for breaking promises and for murder, too. You took a holy oath to fight for

Thou didst receive the sacrament to fight
In quarrel of the house of Lancaster.

FIRST MURDERER

190 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

How canst thou urge God's dreadful law to us
195 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,
For in that sin he is as deep as I.
200 If God will be avengèd for this deed,
O, know you yet He doth it publicly!
Take not the quarrel from His powerful arm;
He needs no indirect or lawless course
To cut off those that have offended Him.

FIRST MURDERER

205 Who made thee then a bloody minister

King Henry VI.

FIRST MURDERER

And like a traitor to God, you broke that oath and savagely
murdered King Henry's young son.

SECOND MURDERER

Whom you swore you would protect and defend.

FIRST MURDERER

How dare you tell us about God's laws when you have broken
them so savagely yourself?

CLARENCE

But for whose sake did I do that sick deed? For my brother
Edward's sake. He couldn't be sending you to murder me for
that sin, because he's the one who asked me to commit it. He
is as guilty as I am. If God will be revenged for this deed, he will
do it publicly. God doesn't need to use indirect or illegal means
to kill those who have offended him.

FIRST MURDERER

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

Thy brother's love, our duty, and thy faults
210 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,
And I will send you to my brother Gloucester,
215 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

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

FIRST MURDERER

Ay, so we will.

CLARENCE

Then who were you working for when you killed brave, young Prince Edward?

CLARENCE

My brother's love, the devil, and my own anger made me do it.

FIRST MURDERER

Well, your brother's love, our duty, and your own crimes make us kill you.

CLARENCE

If you love my brother, don't hate me. I am his brother, and I love him very much. If you're doing this for pay, go to my brother Richard. He will pay you more for saving my life than Edward will for killing me.

SECOND MURDERER

You're mistaken. Richard, the duke of Gloucester, hates you.

CLARENCE

No, he loves and cherishes me. Go to him from me.

FIRST MURDERER

We will.

CLARENCE

220 Tell him, when that our princely father York
Blessed his three sons with his victorious arm,
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

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

FIRST MURDERER

Right, 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
230 That he would labor my delivery.

SECOND MURDERER

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

Have you that holy feeling in your souls

Tell him that when our noble father, the duke of York, gave his three sons his blessing, he never imagined that our friendship would come to this. Remind Richard of this, and he will weep.

FIRST MURDERER

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

CLARENCE

Don't lie about my brother. He is kind.

FIRST MURDERER

Yes, as kind as snow to a harvest. Come on, you're fooling yourself. It's Richard who sent us here to slaughter you.

CLARENCE

It cannot be. When I left him, he hugged me in his arms and swore between sobs that he would work to set me free.

SECOND MURDERER

Well, that's what he's doing—making you free to enjoy heaven.

FIRST MURDERER

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

CLARENCE

235 To counsel me to make my peace with God,
And art you yet to your own souls so blind
That thou will 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.

SECOND MURDERER

240 (*to FIRST MURDERER*) What shall we do?

CLARENCE

Relent, and save your souls.

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 not entreat for life? Ay, you would beg,

245 Were you in my distress.

FIRST MURDERER

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.

250 O, if thine eye be not a flatterer,
Come thou on my side and entreat for me.
A begging prince what beggar pities not?

You have enough holy feeling to advise me to "make peace with God," but you're willing to go to war with 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 should we do?

CLARENCE

Relent, and save your souls. If either of you were a prince's son, and you were imprisoned as I am now, and two murderers like yourselves came to you—wouldn't you beg for your life? Yes, you would beg, if you were in my position.

FIRST MURDERER

Relent? No. That's cowardly and womanish.

CLARENCE

No, sticking to your plan is beastly, savage, devilish. (*to SECOND MURDERER*) My friend, I detect some pity in your eyes. Please, please take my side and argue for my life. What beggar wouldn't have sympathy for a prince reduced to begging?

SECOND MURDERER

Look behind you, my lord.

FIRST MURDERER

Take that, and that. (*stabs CLARENCE*)

255 If all this will not do,

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

260 How now? What mean'st thou, that thou help'st me not?
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**SECOND MURDERER**

Look behind you, my lord.

FIRST MURDERER

Take that, and that. (*he stabs CLARENCE*) If this won't do the job, I'll drown you in the wine barrel in the next room.

He exits with the body.

SECOND MURDERER

A *bloody deed*, and desperately executed. I wish I could wash my hands of this terrible murder, like Pilate.

FIRST MURDERER returns.

FIRST MURDERER

What's going on? What did you mean by not helping me? By God, I'm going to tell the duke how slack you've been.

SECOND MURDERER

I wish you could tell him I saved his brother. Take the money yourself and tell him what I said. I'm sorry this duke was killed.

He exits.

FIRST MURDERER

265 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

I'm not. Go, coward that you are. Well, I'll go hide the body in some hole until the duke gives orders for his burial. And when I get my reward, I'll get out of here. The truth about this will come out, and I can't stick around then.

He exits.

Act 2 Scene 1

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

KING EDWARD IV

Why, so. Now have I done a good day's work.
You peers, continue this united league.
I every day expect an embassage
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 from grudging hate,
10 And with my hand I seal my true heart's love.

KING EDWARD IV

Well. Now I've done a good day's work. You must all keep up this united front. Every day I expect a message from God to bring me away from here. Now my soul can depart for heaven peacefully, since my friends have made peace here on earth. Rivers and Hastings, take each other's hand. Don't simply hide your hatred. Swear your love for each other.

RIVERS

(taking HASTINGS's hand) I swear I have cleansed my heart of all hate. With this handshake, I guarantee my love.

HASTINGS

So thrive I as I truly swear the like.

KING EDWARD IV

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 IV

(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

HASTINGS

On my honor, I feel the same.

KING EDWARD IV

Make sure you mean what you say. Otherwise God, the ultimate King, will uncover your lies and cause you to be the death of each other.

HASTINGS

On my honor, I swear I love Rivers with all my heart.

RIVERS

And I love Hastings with all my heart.

KING EDWARD IV

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) Madam, you're not exempt from this—nor are you, Dorset— nor you, Buckingham. You have had too many separate factions among you. My dear wife, let Lord Hastings kiss your hand. And don't do it merely for appearance's sake.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Take my hand, Hastings. From now on, I'll forget the hatred I used to feel for you.

HASTINGS kisses her hand.

KING EDWARD IV

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 IV

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
Upon your Grace, but with all duteous love
Doth cherish you and yours, God punish me
When I have most need to employ a friend,
With hate in those where I expect most love.

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

KING EDWARD IV

Dorset, embrace Hastings.—Hastings, express your affection
for the marquess of Dorset.

DORSET

I swear I will never break this promise of love.

HASTINGS

And so do I, my lord.

They embrace.

KING EDWARD IV

Now, noble Buckingham, seal this alliance by embracing my
wife's friends, and make me happy in your unity.

BUCKINGHAM

(*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) If I ever turn my hatred toward your
majesty, and do not love and cherish you and yours, may God
punish me. May I find hatred where I most expect love. When I
most need a friend, and when I'm sure I have one, make him
treacherous and deceitful to me. I beg God to do all this
whenever I fail to show love to you or yours.

When I am cold in love to you or yours.

They embrace

KING EDWARD IV

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 IV

Happy indeed, as we have spent the day.
Gloucester, 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.

They embrace.

KING EDWARD IV

Noble Buckingham, your promise is like medicine to my ailing heart. All we need to put the final touches on this future peace is for Richard to appear.

BUCKINGHAM

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

RICHARD and RATCLIFFE enter.

RICHARD

Good morning to my sovereign king and queen. Noble peers, how nice to see you.

KING EDWARD IV

Happy indeed, the way we have spent the day. Gloucester, we have done deeds of charity, turning enmity into peace and hate into love among these mistakenly angry nobles.

RICHARD

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 dutious service;—
Of you, my noble cousin Buckingham,
If ever any grudge were lodged between us;—
70 Of you and you, Lord Rivers and of Dorset,
That all without desert have frowned on me;—
Of you, Lord Woodeville and Lord Scales;— of you,
Dukes, earls, lords, gentlemen; indeed, of all.
I do not know that Englishman alive
75 With whom my soul is any jot at odds
More than the infant that is born tonight.
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.
80 My sovereign lord, I do beseech your Highness

What blessed work, my king. If there's anyone among this princely group who mistakes me for an enemy—if by accident or in anger I have done anything to offend you—I want to join with you in peaceful friendship. It kills me to be enemies with you. I hate it and want all good men's love. (*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) First, madam, I want there to be peace between you and me, which I will buy with my obedient service to you. And peace with you, my noble cousin Buckingham, if you ever felt any grudge against me; and with you, Lord Rivers, and, Lord Grey, with you. In fact, I want to get along with everyone who has frowned on me without good cause—dukes, earls, lords, gentlemen, everyone. There is not an Englishman alive with whom I'm at odds, anymore than a newborn baby would be. I thank God for my humbleness.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Today shall always be remembered as a holy day. If only all struggles ended this well. One more thing, my dear majesty. Please pardon our brother Clarence.

To take our brother Clarence to your grace.

RICHARD

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

85 You do him injury to scorn his corse.

KING EDWARD IV

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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
90 But his red color hath forsook his cheeks.

KING EDWARD IV

Is Clarence dead? The order was reversed.

RICHARD

But he, poor man, by your first order died,

RICHARD

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

They all start.

You do him wrong to laugh at his corpse.

KING EDWARD IV

Who doesn't know he's dead? Who says he is?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh my God, what a terrible world this is!

BUCKINGHAM

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

DORSET

You do, my good lord. Everyone here has turned white.

KING EDWARD IV

Is Clarence dead? But I reversed the death sentence.

RICHARD

And that a wingèd Mercury did bear.
Some tardy cripple bear the countermand,
95 That came too lag to see him burièd.
God grant that some, less noble and less loyal,
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

100 (*kneeling*) A boon, my sovereign, for my service done.

KING EDWARD IV

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

STANLEY

I will not rise unless your Highness hear me.

KING EDWARD IV

Then say at once what is it thou requests.

STANLEY

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

KING EDWARD IV

Well, the poor man died by your first order, which was carried by a winged messenger. Some tardy cripple must have taken the counter-order, who came after Clarence was already buried. It's clear that someone less noble, less loyal, more bloody-minded than Clarence but not a blood relation, deserves as bad an end as my brother, but he goes free.

Lord STANLEY, Earl of Derby, enters.

STANLEY

(*kneeling*) I ask a favor of you in return for the service I've done, my king.

KING EDWARD IV

Please be quiet. My soul is full of sorrow.

STANLEY

I will not rise until your Highness hears me.

KING EDWARD IV

Then hurry up and tell me what you want.

STANLEY

That you lift the death sentence on my servant, who killed a rowdy and belligerent former servant of the duke of Norfolk.

KING EDWARD IV

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,
110 And yet his punishment was bitter death.
Who sued to me for him? Who, in my wrath,
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
115 The mighty Warwick and did fight for me?
Who told me, in the field by Tewkesbury,
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
120 Frozen almost to death, how he did lap me
Even in his garments and did give himself,
All thin and naked, to the numb-cold night?
All this from my remembrance brutish wrath
Sinfully plucked, and not a man of you
125 Had so much grace to put it in my mind.
But when your carters or your waiting vassals
Have done a drunken slaughter and defaced
The precious image of our dear Redeemer,
You straight are on your knees for pardon, pardon,
130 And I, unjustly too, must grant it you.

Stanley rises

But for my brother, not a man would speak,

I was willing to condemn my brother to death, but you want
me to pardon a peasant? My brother didn't kill anyone. He was
only to blame for some thoughts he had. But his punishment
was bitter death. Who pleaded with me to pardon *his* life?
Who, when I was in a rage, kneeled at my feet and told me to
reconsider? Who talked about brotherhood? Who talked about
love? Who told me how the poor man abandoned the mighty
earl of Warwick to fight for me? Who told me how he rescued
me in the field at Tewksbury, when Oxford had me down,
saying, "Dear brother, live and be a king"? Who told me how,
when we both lay in the field freezing to death, he wrapped
me in his own clothes and spent a numbingly cold night
naked? I forgot all of this in my brutish anger, and not one of
you had the grace to remind me. But when your servants get
drunk and kill someone, you go right down on your knees for
"pardon, pardon." And, though he doesn't deserve it, I have to
grant your request. But not one of you would speak up for my
brother. And I didn't speak to myself on his behalf, either. The
best of you owed something to him in his lifetime, but none of
you would plead for his life. Oh God, I fear your justice will
destroy me and all of these men, and their families and mine,
because of this! Come, Hastings, help me to my room. Oh,
poor Clarence.

Nor I, ungracious, speak unto myself
For him, poor soul. The proudest of you all
135 Have been beholding to him in his life,
Yet none of you would once beg for his life.
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.—
140 Ah, poor Clarence.

Exeunt some with KING EDWARD IV and QUEEN ELIZABETH

RICHARD

This is the fruits of rashness. Marked you not
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.
145 God will revenge it. Come, lords, will you go
To comfort Edward with our company?

BUCKINGHAM

We wait upon your Grace.

Exeunt

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

KING EDWARD IV and QUEEN ELIZABETH exit with several others.

RICHARD

This is what happens when you act rashly. Did you notice how the queen's guilty relatives turned pale when they heard about Clarence's death? Oh, they continually urged the king to do it. God will revenge it. But come, lords, will you come with me to Edward's room to comfort him?

BUCKINGHAM

We'll come with you, your Grace.

They all exit.

Act 2 Scene 2

The old DUCHESS OF YORK enters with CLARENCE's two children.

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**BOY**

Tell me, good grandmother, is our father dead?

DUCHESS

No, boy.

GIRL

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

BOY

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

DUCHESS

My pretty children, both of you misunderstand me. I'm
lamenting the sickness of the king, because I'd hate to lose
him—I'm not mourning your father's death. What would be the
point of crying over someone who was already dead?

BOY

So you're admitting Clarence, my father, is dead. My uncle the
king is to blame for this. God will take revenge. I will pray every
day that he does.

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 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.

And so will I.

DUCHESS

Quiet, children, quiet. The king loves you very much. Innocent sweethearts, you have no idea who's responsible for your father's death.

BOY

Yes we do, grandmother, because my good uncle Richard told me. He said the king was forced by the queen to make up charges against my father that would send him to prison. When my uncle explained this to me, he wept and hugged and kissed me. He told me I could rely on him as if he were my father, and he said he would love me as if I were his child.

DUCHESS

Ah, it's a shame that a liar can seem so nice, hiding his wicked intentions under a mask of goodness. He is my son, yes, and I'm ashamed of him. But he didn't get his deceitfulness from my breast.

BOY

You think my uncle was lying, grandmother?

DUCHESS

Yes, 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-wingèd souls may catch the king's,
45 Or, like obedient subjects, follow him
To his new kingdom of ne'er-changing night.

DUCHESS**BOY**

I can't believe that. Wait! What's that noise?

QUEEN ELIZABETH enters with her hair undone. RIVERS, and DORSET follow.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

No one can stop me now from wailing and weeping about my terrible luck. I don't care if it kills me. I plan to fall into the blackest despair.

DUCHESS

Why are you making such a scene?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I'm simply performing the violent tragedy that is my life: Edward—my husband, your son, our king—is dead. Why should we live now that our leader is dead? Why are the branches still living when the root is gone? Why aren't the leaves withering now that the sap is all dried up?

If you do intend to live, then mourn. If you're going to die, be quick about it so you can catch the king's departing soul or follow him, like obedient subjects, to his new kingdom of endless 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

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Give me no help in lamentation.

As the king's mother, I have a large share in your grief. I have wept at my own good husband's death and only kept myself alive by looking at his sons, the mirror images of him. But now these two mirrors of their princely father have cracked to pieces: my sons are dead. And my only comfort is Richard, who is nothing like his father and only causes me shame. You may be a widow, but you're also a mother. You have your children as comfort. But death has snatched my husband from my arms and plucked my two crutches, Edward and Clarence, from my feeble hands. Since your woes are only a portion of mine, I have every reason to surpass your lamentations and drown out your cries with my own.

BOY

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) Ah, Aunt, you didn't weep at our father's death. How can we help you by crying for your sorrow?

GIRL

You didn't sympathize with us when we became orphans; we won't cry for you!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I am not barren to bring forth complaints.
All springs reduce their currents to mine eyes,
That I, being governed by the watery moon,
70 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

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

CHILDREN

75 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.

I don't need your help in grieving. I have my own sources of misery. In fact, all the world's springs and oceans flow from my weeping eyes. I could drown the world. My poor husband, my dear Edward!

CHILDREN

Our poor father, Clarence!

DUCHESS

My sons Edward and Clarence!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What support did I have other than Edward? And now he's gone.

CHILDREN

What support did we have besides our father? And now he's gone.

DUCHESS

What support did I have besides my two sons? And now they're both gone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

There has never been a widow who suffered such loss as me.

CHILDREN

There have never been orphans who've suffered what we have.

DUCHESS

Was never mother had so dear a loss.
80 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.
These babes for Clarence weep and so do I;
85 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

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) Comfort, dear mother. God is
much displeased
90 That you take with unthankfulness, his doing.
In common worldly things, 'tis called ungrateful
With dull unwillingness to repay a debt
Which with a bounteous hand was kindly lent;
Much more to be thus opposite with heaven,
95 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.
Let him be crowned. In him your comfort lives.

DUCHESS

There was never a mother who suffered so much loss. Alas, I
am the mother of all these others' griefs. Each of them has a
single loss, while I share them all. She weeps for Edward and
so do I, while she does not weep for Clarence, though I do.
These young children cry for Clarence and so do I, though they
don't cry for Edward, as I do. Alas, all of you can turn to me
with your sorrow, because I feel all of it. I will comfort you by
adding my own grief to your sorrow.

DORSET

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) Calm down, dear mother. God is
unhappy that you've responded so unthankfully to his doings.
In everyday life, when a person is unwilling to pay back a loan
that was generously offered, he's considered ungrateful. How
much worse it is when Heaven is the lender, as in your case?

RIVERS

Be a careful mother, madam, and think about your son, the
young prince. Send for him right away and have him crowned.
Your peace of mind depends on him. Bury your sorrows in

Drown desperate sorrow in dead Edward's grave
100 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,
But none can help our harms by wailing them.—
Madam, my mother, I do cry you mercy;
105 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,
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty.

RICHARD

(standing) Amen. (aside) And make me die a good old man!
110 That is the butt end of a mother's blessing;
I marvel that her Grace did leave it out.

BUCKINGHAM

You cloudy princes and heart-sorrowing peers
That bear this heavy mutual load of moan,

dead Edward's grave and plant your hopes in Prince Edward's rise to the throne.

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

RICHARD

Sister, calm down. All of us have reason to mourn the dimming of our shining star the king. But no good comes from all this wailing. Oh, mother, forgive me. I didn't see you there. On my knee, I humbly ask your blessing.

He kneels

DUCHESS

God bless you and make you obedient, loving, and kind.

RICHARD

(he stands) Amen. (to himself) And make me die a good old man! That should be the point of a mother's blessing. I'm surprised my mother forgot to make it.

BUCKINGHAM

You mournful princes and grieving gentlemen who have been sharing this burden of grief, now it's time to cheer each other

Now cheer each other in each other's love.

115 Though we have spent our harvest of this king,

We are to reap the harvest of his son.

The broken rancor of your high-swoll'n hates,

But lately splintered, knit, and joined together,

Must gently be preserved, cherished, and kept.

120 Meseemeth good that with some little train

Forthwith from Ludlow the young prince be fet

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

125 The new-healed wound of malice should break out,

Which would be so much the more dangerous

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,

130 As well the fear of harm as harm apparent,

In my opinion, ought to be prevented.

RICHARD

I hope the king made peace with all of us;

And the compact is firm and true in me.

RIVERS

up with love. Though we have lost a generous king, we are about to enjoy the benefits of a new king. We must preserve our goodwill toward each other and not break into factions again. I think a few members of the court should fetch the young prince from Wales and bring him to London to be crowned our king.

RIVERS

Why only a few courtiers, my lord of Buckingham?

BUCKINGHAM

Because if many of us go there, the hostility between us may break out again, which would be very dangerous with the young prince so newly crowned. When you have a situation where everyone seems free to take off on his or her own, it's important that the heads of state keep a low profile. We wouldn't want the prince or his new authority to be undermined by squabbling factions.

RICHARD

The king made peace among all of us. I, at least, intend to stick to our agreement to get along.

RIVERS

And so in me, and so, I think, in all.

135 Yet since it is but green, it should be put
To no apparent likelihood of breach,
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

140 And so say I.

RICHARD

Then be it so, and go we to determine
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

145 My lord, whoever journeys to the prince,
For God's sake let not us two at home.
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

150 My other self, my council's consistory,
My oracle, my prophet, my dear cousin,

And so do I. I think we all do. But, since our agreement is a recent development, it shouldn't be put to the test, which could happen if the coronation turned into a huge ceremony. So, I agree with noble Buckingham—only a few should go to meet the prince.

HASTINGS

I think so too.

RICHARD

Then we're agreed. Now we need to figure out which of us will go to meet him. Madam and mother, will you go to offer your support to this weighty business?

Everyone but BUCKINGHAM and RICHARD exits.

BUCKINGHAM

For God's sake, my lord, let's be sure to be part of the group that meets the prince. Along the way, I'll find an opportunity to separate him from the queen's proud relatives, as step one in the plan we've discussed.

RICHARD

You are my other self, my oracle, my prophet, my dear brother! I plan to act like a child and do exactly what you say. To Wales

I, as a child, will go by thy direction
Toward Ludlow then, for we'll not stay behind.

Exeunt

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.

then, for we will not be left out.

They exit.

Act 2 Scene 3

Two CITIZENS enter through different doors.

FIRST CITIZEN

Good morrow, neighbor, whither away so fast?

SECOND CITIZEN

I'm telling you, I hardly know myself. Did you hear the news
that's going around?

FIRST CITIZEN

Yes, that the king is dead.

SECOND CITIZEN

Bad news, by God. The news is always bad. But this news is
bound to make the world go mad.

A THIRD CITIZEN enters.

THIRD CITIZEN

Neighbors, hello.

FIRST CITIZEN

Good day to you, 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

In him there is a hope of government,

15 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

THIRD CITIZEN

Is it true that good King Edward has died?

SECOND CITIZEN

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

THIRD CITIZEN

Then, gentlemen, we can count on trouble.

FIRST CITIZEN

No, no, with God's help, his son will be king.

THIRD CITIZEN

It's bad news when a country is ruled by a child.

SECOND CITIZEN

His counselors will govern as long as he's a minor, and then
he'll take over. It shouldn't go so badly.

FIRST CITIZEN

That's how it was with Henry the Sixth, who was crowned in
Paris when he was only nine months old.

THIRD CITIZEN

Really? But at that point, the king had the benefit of excellent
counselors. His uncles were good men and protected him.

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 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.

FIRST CITIZEN

Well, this king has uncles too, on both his father and mother's side.

THIRD CITIZEN

It would be better if they were all on his father's side, or that there were none at all on his father's side. As it is, the rivalry between his father's and mother's relatives over who will be closest to the king is likely to endanger everyone, if we're not lucky. As it stands, there's a struggle between the two sides for the prince's attention. Richard, the duke of Gloucester, is very dangerous, and the queen's sons and brothers are haughty and proud—it would be better for this ailing country if they were subjects, not rulers.

FIRST CITIZEN

Come, come, we're worrying about the worst-case scenario. I'm sure everything will be fine.

THIRD CITIZEN

When the day turns cloudy, wise men put on their coats. When leaves fall from the trees, it means winter has arrived. When the sun sets, who's too stupid to recognize it's night? When storms arrive early, you can expect the harvest will be damaged. So, if all turns out fine, as you say, it's 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

*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.

SECOND CITIZEN

It's true, people are really worried. It's hard to find a person
who isn't.

THIRD CITIZEN

It's always like this in times of change. By some sort of deep
instinct, we always know when danger is approaching, just as
we know that a storm is coming when the sea swells. But leave
it all to God. Where are you all off to?

SECOND CITIZEN

The court has sent for us.

THIRD CITIZEN

For me, too. I'll go with you.

They all exit.

Act 2 Scene 4

*The ARCHBISHOP of York, QUEEN ELIZABETH, her son, the
young duke of YORK, and the DUCHESS of York enter.*

ARCHBISHOP

Last night, I hear, they stayed in Stony Stratford. Tonight they
will rest in Northampton. They'll be here tomorrow or the next

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."
And since, methinks I would not grow so fast

15 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,

day.

DUCHESS

I'm dying to see the prince. I hope he's grown a lot since I last saw him.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But I hear he hasn't. They say my son York has almost passed him in height.

YORK

Yes, mother, but I wish I hadn't.

DUCHESS

Why, dear child? It's good to grow.

YORK

Grandmother, one night when we were eating dinner, my uncle Rivers mentioned that I had grown more than my brother. "Yes," said my uncle Gloucester, "Small plants are graceful, while ugly weeds grow fast." And since then, I've wished I wouldn't grow so fast, because sweet flowers are slow while the weeds grow in a hurry.

DUCHESS

Well, it certainly wasn't true for Richard! As a child, he took such a long time to grow up that, according to his rule, he should have grown up into a gracious adult.

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.

YORK

And no doubt he is, gracious madam.

DUCHESS

I hope he is, but mothers get to have their doubts.

YORK

Hey, if I'd remembered something about him, I could have had a good comeback for my uncle, touching on his growth worse than he touched on mine.

DUCHESS

What would you have said, my young York? Do tell.

YORK

Indeed, they say my uncle grew so fast that he could gnaw on a crust of bread when he was two hours old. It took me two years before I had a single tooth. Grandmother, this would have been a biting joke.

DUCHESS

Pretty York, who told you about his teeth?

YORK

His nurse, grandmother.

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

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

YORK

Well, if it wasn't her, I don't know.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

A mischievous child. Come, come, you are too clever for your own good.

DUCHESS

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Little pitchers have big ears.

A MESSENGER enters.

ARCHBISHOP

Here comes a messenger. What's the news?

MESSENGER

My lord, it's news I wish I didn't have to report.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

How's the prince?

MESSENGER

He's fine and healthy, madam.

DUCHESS

What is thy 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.

ARCBISHOP

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

What is your news?

MESSENGER

Lord Rivers and Lord Grey have been imprisoned in [Pomfret](#).
So has Sir Thomas Vaughan.

DUCHESS

Who sent them there?

MESSENGER

The powerful dukes Gloucester and Buckingham.

ARCBISHOP

What did they do wrong?

MESSENGER

I've told you everything I know. Why the nobles were
imprisoned, and on what charges, I don't know, my gracious
lord.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh no! I see the downfall of my family. The tiger has seized the
gentle deer: a tyrant has begun to attack the weak, innocent
king. Welcome, destruction, blood, and massacre! I can see
how all this will end as clearly as if I was looking at a map.

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

Stay, I will go with you

QUEEN ELIZABETH

70 You have no cause.

ARCBISHOP

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH)
My gracious lady, go,
And thither bear your treasure and your goods.
For my part, I'll resign unto your Grace

DUCHESS

How many times have I had to live through cursed times of violent struggle? My husband lost his life to get the crown, and my sons' fortunes have been tossed up and down, leaving me to rejoice over their victories and weep over their losses. And once one of them achieved the throne and had taken care of domestic quarrels, they made war among themselves. It's a preposterous outrage. Let it end, or let me die so I won't have to watch any more of it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

(to YORK) Come, my boy, let's go to [sanctuary](#). Madam, farewell.

DUCHESS

Wait, I'll go with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You have no reason to.

ARCBISHOP

(to QUEEN ELIZABETH) My gracious lady, go, and take your money and [belongings](#) with you. For my part, I'll reassign the Great Seal of England to you and will take it upon myself to protect you. Come, I'll conduct you to the [sanctuary](#).

75 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

They all exit.

Act 3 Scene 1

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

No, uncle, but our crosses on the way
5 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;
Nor more can you distinguish of a man
10 Than of his outward show, which, God He knows,
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart.

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

BUCKINGHAM

Welcome, sweet prince, to London, the capital of the king.

RICHARD

Welcome, dear nephew, king of all my thoughts. The tiring journey seems to have made you gloomy.

PRINCE

It wasn't the journey itself, uncle, but the troubles we encountered that made it wearisome and dull. I want more uncles here to welcome me.

RICHARD

Sweet prince, you're just an innocent child. You don't really understand how capable people are of trickery. All you know is what a man shows you, which has little to do with what he's really thinking. Those uncles that you wish were here were dangerous. Your Grace heard their saccharine words, but didn't

Those uncles which you want were dangerous.

Your Grace attended to their sugared words

But looked not on the poison of their hearts.

15 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

I thank you, good my lord, and thank you all.—

20 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

And in good time here comes the sweating lord.

PRINCE

take note of their poisonous intentions. God protect you from them and from other false friends!

PRINCE

God should keep me from false friends, but they weren't false.

RICHARD

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

*The **LORD MAYOR** and his train enter.*

LORD MAYOR

God bless your Grace with health and happy days.

PRINCE

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

***HASTINGS** enters.*

BUCKINGHAM

And, just in time, here comes the sweaty lord.

PRINCE

25 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
Would fain have come with me to meet your Grace,
30 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
Unto his princely brother presently?—
35 If she deny, Lord Hastings, go with him,
And from her jealous arms pluck him perforce.

CARDINAL

My Lord of Buckingham, if my weak oratory
Can from his mother win the duke of York,
Anon expect him here; but if she be obdurate
40 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

You are too senseless obstinate, my lord,

Welcome, my lord. What, isn't my mother coming?

HASTINGS

God knows why, but your mother and your brother have taken
sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. Your sweet brother wanted to
come meet you, but his mother wouldn't let him.

BUCKINGHAM

Damn, what a sneaky and spiteful course your mother is
taking!—Lord Cardinal, will you please persuade the queen to
hurry and send the duke of York here?—Go with him, Lord
Hastings, and if she refuses, take the boy from her by force.

CARDINAL

My Lord of Buckingham, if my weak skills of persuasion
convince his mother to part with the duke of York, you can
expect him here shortly. But if she resists my mild pleas, let
God in heaven forbid us from disobeying the holy laws of the
sanctuary and taking the child from her. I wouldn't commit so
serious a crime for anything.

BUCKINGHAM

45 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

To those whose dealings have deserved the place

50 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,

You break no privilege nor charter there.

55 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

I go, my lord.

PRINCE

60 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?

You are too inexplicably stubborn, my lord, too stuck on ceremony. In these less dainty times, you're not breaking the laws of sanctuary to seize him. It's only a sanctuary for those who really need protection or those who are smart enough to claim they do. The prince has done neither; therefore, in my opinion, he isn't really protected by sanctuary. You're not breaking any holy laws to take him away. Often I have heard of "sanctuary men," but until now I've never heard of "sanctuary children."

CARDINAL

My lord, you've won me over this time. Lord Hastings, will you go with me?

HASTINGS

I'm coming, my lord.

PRINCE

Go as fast as you can.

CARDINAL and HASTINGS exit.

Say, uncle Richard, if my brother comes, where will I stay till

my coronation?

RICHARD

Where it seems best unto your royal self.
If I may counsel you, some day or two
65 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.—
Did Julius Caesar build that place, my lord?

BUCKINGHAM

70 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

Upon record, my gracious lord.

PRINCE

75 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

Whatever seems best to you. If I can give you some advice, if I were you, I would stay in the Tower for a day or two. Then you can stay wherever best suits your health and entertainment needs.

PRINCE

Of all places, I don't like the [Tower](#). Didn't Julius Caesar build it, my lord?

BUCKINGHAM

He started it, my noble lord, and succeeding generations rebuilt it.

PRINCE

Is it on record that he built it, or is it just word of mouth?

BUCKINGHAM

On record, my gracious lord.

PRINCE

Well, I think that even if it weren't on record, the truth would be remembered from one generation to the next—all the way to Doomsday.

RICHARD

(aside) So wise so young, they say, do never live long.

PRINCE

80 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

That Julius Caesar was a famous man.

85 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.

I'll tell you what, my cousin Buckingham—

BUCKINGHAM

90 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

(to himself) As the saying goes, "Those that are this wise when they're this young won't live long."

PRINCE

What did you say, uncle?

RICHARD

I said, "When there are no written records, a person's fame lasts for a long time." (to himself) Like [Injustice](#), I get two meanings out of one word.

PRINCE

That Julius Caesar was a famous man. His courage helped his cleverness, and his cleverness made sure that his reputation for being courageous outlived him. Death didn't conquer *this* conqueror, for he lives on in his fame, even though he's dead.
I'll tell you what, my cousin Buckingham—

BUCKINGHAM

What, my dear lord?

PRINCE

If I live to be a man, I'll win [France](#) again or die a soldier, as honorably as I lived as a king.

RICHARD

(aside) Short summers lightly have a forward spring.

Enter young YORK, HASTINGS, and the CARDINAL

BUCKINGHAM

95 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

Ay, brother, to our grief, as it is yours.

Too late he died that might have kept that title,

100 Which by his death hath lost much majesty.

RICHARD

How fares our cousin, noble Lord of York?

YORK

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**RICHARD**

(to himself) As the saying goes, "Short summers often have an early spring." This smarty-pants won't live long.

Young YORK, HASTINGS, and the CARDINAL enter.

BUCKINGHAM

Making good time, here's the duke of York.

PRINCE

Richard of York, how are you doing, my loving brother?

YORK

Very well, my supreme lord—that's what I have to call you now.

PRINCE

Yes, brother, I feel bad about that, too. The man who might have kept that title died too soon, and now it isn't worth nearly as much.

RICHARD

How's my nephew doing, noble lord of York?

YORK

Thank you for asking, uncle. Oh, my lord, you once said that lazy weeds grow fast. The prince has far outgrown me.

RICHARD

105 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.

RICHARD

He may command me as my sovereign,

110 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

Of my kind uncle, that I know will give,

115 And being but a toy, which is no grief to give.

RICHARD

He has, my lord.

YORK

Does that mean he's lazy?

RICHARD

Oh, my handsome nephew, I must not say that.

YORK

In that case, he's more obliged to you than I am.

RICHARD

He may command me as my king, but you still have power over me as a relative.

YORK

Uncle, please give me your dagger.

RICHARD

My dagger, little nephew? With all my heart.

PRINCE

Are you begging, brother?

YORK

From my kind uncle, who I know will give it to me, especially as it's not worth much.

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

O, then I see you will part but with light gifts.

120 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

I would, that I might thank you as you call me.

RICHARD

125 How?

YORK

Little.

I'll give you a greater gift than that, nephew.

YORK

A greater gift? That must mean a sword.

RICHARD

Yes, gentle cousin, if it were light enough for you.

YORK

Oh, I see, you will only part with lightweight presents. For more important things, you'll say no.

RICHARD

A sword's too heavy for you to wear.

YORK

I wouldn't think much of it even if it were heavier.

RICHARD

What, do you want to wear *my* weapon, little lord?

YORK

I do, so I can thank you for what you called me.

RICHARD

What's that?

YORK

"Little."

PRINCE

My lord of York will still be cross in talk.
Uncle, your Grace knows how to bear with him.

YORK

You mean, to bear me, not to bear with me.—
130 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

(aside) With what a sharp-provided wit he reasons!
To mitigate the scorn he gives his uncle,
135 He prettily and aptly taunts himself.
So cunning and so young is wonderful.

RICHARD

(to PRINCE) My lord, will 't please you pass along?
Myself and my good cousin Buckingham
Will to your mother, to entreat of her
140 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.

PRINCE

The lord of York is always a bit perverse in his chatter. But, uncle, you know how to bear with him.

YORK

You mean, to bear me, not to bear *with* me. Uncle, my brother makes fun of both of us. Because I'm little, like an *ape*, he thinks you should bear me on your shoulders, like a fool.

BUCKINGHAM

(to himself) What a sharp mind this boy has! To make up for his scorn toward his uncle, he makes fun of himself as well. It's amazing that he's so cunning at his age.

RICHARD

(to PRINCE) My lord, will you please continue on your way to the Tower? My good cousin Buckingham and I will go to your mother and ask her to meet you there.

YORK

(to PRINCE) What, you're going to the Tower, my lord?

PRINCE

My protector, Richard, insists on it.

YORK

I shall not sleep in quiet at the Tower.

RICHARD

Why, what should you fear?

YORK

145 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

An if they live, I hope I need not fear.

150 (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

Think you, my lord, this little prating York
Was not incensèd by his subtle mother
To taunt and scorn you thus opprobriously?

YORK

I can't sleep quietly in the Tower.

RICHARD

Why, what are you afraid of?

YORK

My uncle Clarence's angry ghost. My grandmother told me he was murdered there.

PRINCE

I'm not afraid of dead uncles.

RICHARD

Nor living ones, I hope.

PRINCE

Well, I hope not. (to YORK) But come, my lord. With a heavy heart, thinking about my dead uncles, I will go to the Tower.

A trumpet sounds. Everyone except RICHARD, BUCKINGHAM, and CATESBY exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Richard, don't you think this chattering little York was encouraged to taunt you by his sneaky mother in that outrageous way?

RICHARD

155 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

Well, let them rest.—Come hither, Catesby.
Thou art sworn as deeply to effect what we intend
160 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
For the installment of this noble duke
165 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

He will do all in all as Hastings doth.

BUCKINGHAM

170 Well then, no more but this: go, gentle Catesby,
And, as it were far off, sound thou Lord Hastings

RICHARD

No doubt, no doubt. Oh, he's a dangerously clever boy—bold,
quick-witted, capable. He's his mother's child from head to toe.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, enough about them.—Come here, Catesby. You've sworn
to participate in our plot and to keep it a secret. What do you
think: wouldn't it be easy to convince Lord Hastings to join us in
installing Richard as king of England?

CATESBY

Hastings loved the prince's father so much that we won't be
able to persuade him to do anything against the prince.

BUCKINGHAM

What about Stanley? Won't he join us?

CATESBY

He'll do whatever Hastings does.

BUCKINGHAM

Okay, just do this, noble Catesby: sound out Lord Hastings, but
make it seem as if you're just mulling over the idea, that it

How he doth stand affected to our purpose
And summon him tomorrow to the Tower
To sit about the coronation.

175 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,
And give us notice of his inclination;
180 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
Tomorrow are let blood at Pomfret castle,
185 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

Shall we hear from you, Catesby, ere we sleep?

CATESBY

hasn't been firmed up yet. Invite him to come to the Tower tomorrow for the coronation ceremony. If he seems game to our plan, encourage him to join us and explain all our reasons. But if he's resistant and chilly, then be like that too and break off the conversation. Let us know how he responds. Tomorrow we're going to hold two separate meetings, one for those who are with us and one for those who aren't. You'll have a lot to do in these meetings.

RICHARD

Give my regards to Hastings, Catesby. Tell him the nest of dangerous enemies that plagued him for years will die tomorrow at Pomfret. And tell him to give [Mistress](#) Shore one extra kiss to celebrate this good news.

BUCKINGHAM

Good Catesby, do your work well.

CATESBY

My good lords, I plan to.

RICHARD

Will we hear from you before bedtime, Catesby?

CATESBY

190 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

Chop off his head. Something we will determine.
195 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

And look to have it yielded with all kindness.
200 Come, let us sup betimes, that afterwards
We may digest our complots in some form.

Exeunt

Enter a MESSENGER at door of HASTINGS

You will, my lord.

RICHARD

You'll find us both at Crosby Place.

CATESBY exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Now, my lord, what are we going to do if we find that Lord Hastings won't go along with our plans?

RICHARD

Chop off his head. Whatever we decide to do. And when I'm king, remember to ask me for the earldom of Hereford and all the possessions that go with it, which my brother the king used to own.

BUCKINGHAM

I look forward to that present.

RICHARD

You'll find I'll give it to you very willingly. Come, let's have an early dinner so that we have time to work out our plans.

They exit.

Act 3 Scene 2

A MESSENGER enters and goes to Hastings's door.

MESSENGER

(knocking) My lord, my lord.

HASTINGS

(within) Who knocks?

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

MESSENGER

(knocking) My lord, my lord.

HASTINGS

(offstage) Who's knocking?

MESSENGER

A messenger from Lord Stanley.

HASTINGS

(offstage) What time is it?

MESSENGER

Four o'clock in the morning.

HASTINGS Enter

HASTINGS

Can't Lord Stanley sleep?

MESSENGER

I guess not—for good reason, as you'll soon hear. First, he sends his regards.

HASTINGS

And then?

MESSENGER

He dreamt the boar had razèd 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

And then he said to tell you that tonight he dreamed the duke of Gloucester cut off his helmet—that is, his head. Besides that, he says that two meetings are going to be held tomorrow, and something may be decided at one of them that may make you and him, who are at the other, sorry. He wants to know if instead of going to the meeting, you'll get on your horse and ride north with him to get out of harm's way.

HASTINGS

Go, man, return to your lord and tell him not to worry about the separate meetings. While he and I are at one, my loyal servant Catesby will be at the other, so nothing will happen that we won't find out about. Tell your master there is no sound basis for his worries. And as for his dreams, I'm surprised he's so foolish as to trust the fantasies of a restless night. If we flee from the boar before the boar even pursues us, we'll only make the boar angry and suspicious, causing him to chase us when he never intended to. Tell your master to get up and come here, and we'll go together to the Tower to meet the boar , who will treat us well, as he'll see.

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?

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?

I'll go, my lord, and tell him what you say.

He exits.

CATESBY enters.

CATESBY

Good morning, my noble lord.

HASTINGS

Good day, Catesby. You're up early. What news can you tell me in this fast-moving, unsteady state of ours?

CATESBY

Our world sure is spinning fast, my lord. I believe it won't stop moving and stand upright till Richard wears the wreath of the realm.

HASTINGS

What do you mean, "wears the wreath"? Are you talking about the crown?

CATESBY

Yes, my good lord.

HASTINGS

I'll have my head cut from my shoulders before I'll see the crown so misplaced. But do you think that's what he's aiming for?

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.

CATESBY

Yes, I swear, and he hopes you'll join his party to help. For that reason he sends you this good news—that this very day your enemies, the queen's relatives, will die at Pomfret.

HASTINGS

Well, I'm not sorry to hear that, because they have always been my enemies. But the idea that I'd give my support to Richard and keep my master King Edward IV's true heirs from the crown—never. God knows I'd die before I'd do that.

CATESBY

Well, let's hope you stay in that noble frame of mind.

HASTINGS

In a year, when things have calmed down, I'll laugh about how those who got King Edward IV to hate me are now brought low. But as for now—before two weeks have gone by, I'm going to send some people packing. They have no idea what's coming.

CATESBY

It's a horrible thing to die when you're not prepared for it, my gracious lord.

HASTINGS

O monstrous, monstrous! And so falls it out
65 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.

CATESBY

The princes both make high account of you— *(aside)* For they
account his head upon the Bridge.

HASTINGS

70 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,

HASTINGS

Yes, monstrous, monstrous! That's how it will be for Rivers,
Vaughan, and Grey. That's how it will be for some other men,
too, who think they're as safe as you and I, who are well-loved
by noble Richard and Buckingham.

CATESBY

Richard and Buckingham have a high opinion of you. *(to himself)* So high they'll stick your head on the [Bridge](#).

HASTINGS

I know they do, and I certainly deserve it.

STANLEY enters.

Come on, come on, where is your spear for the boar, man?
You're afraid of the boar but you go around without your
spear?

STANLEY

My lord, good morning. Good morning, Catesby. Go ahead and
laugh at me, but by Jesus, I don't like these separate meetings
—I really don't.

HASTINGS

My lord, my life is as important to me as yours is to you, and it
was never as precious to me as it is now. Do you think I would

Was it so precious to me as 'tis now.
Think you but that I know our state secure,
80 I would be so triumphant as I am?

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;
But yet you see how soon the day o'er cast.
85 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?
Today the lords you talked of are beheaded.

LORD STANLEY

90 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

be feeling as triumphant as I am if I didn't know that our situation was secure?

STANLEY

When the lords who are imprisoned at Pomfret left London, they also were in a good mood and supposed their situation was secure. And they also had no reason to worry. But you see how soon the day got cloudy for them. Richard's sudden, hateful attack on them makes me worry. I hope to God I'm proven wrong! Well, should we head to the Tower? The day is well on its way.

HASTINGS

Come on, let's get going. You know what, my lord? Those men you just mentioned will be beheaded today.

LORD STANLEY

They deserved to keep their heads more than some people who have managed to keep their positions. But come, my lord, let's go.

A *PURSUIVANT* enters.

HASTINGS

Go on ahead. I'll talk with this good man.

STANLEY and CATESBY exit.

How now, sirrah! How goes the world with thee?

PURSUIVANT

95 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
By the suggestion of
the queen's allies.

But now, I tell thee—keep it to thyself—

100 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

Gramercy, fellow. There, drink that for me.

Throws him his purse

PURSUIVANT

I thank your Honor.

Exit

Enter a PRIEST

What's up, man? How's it going?

PURSUIVANT

Better, since your lordship was nice enough to ask.

HASTINGS

I tell you, man, it's better for me, too, than the last time we met here. Then I was on my way to the Tower, where I was going to be locked up thanks to the false charges of the queen's allies. But now, I tell you—keep it to yourself, though—those enemies of mine are being put to death today, and I'm better than I've ever been.

PURSUIVANT

Well, let's hope your good fortune continues!

HASTINGS

Thanks a lot, mister. Here, drink to me.

He throws the PURSUIVANT some money.

PURSUIVANT

God be good to you!

He exits.

A PRIEST enters.

PRIEST

105 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.
Come the next sabbath, and I will content you.

PRIEST

I'll wait upon your Lordship

HASTINGS whispers in his ear.

Exit PRIEST

Enter BUCKINGHAM

BUCKINGHAM

110 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

Good faith, and when I met this holy man,
The men you talk of came into my mind.
115 What, go you toward the Tower?

BUCKINGHAM

I do, my lord, but long I shall not stay there.

PRIEST

A nice coincidence, my lord. I'm glad to see you.

HASTINGS

I thank you, Sir John, with all my heart. I am indebted to you for
your last sermon. By next week, I'll be able to pay you.

PRIEST

I'll come to you, your Lordship.

HASTINGS whispers in his ear.

The PRIEST exits.

BUCKINGHAM enters.

BUCKINGHAM

What, talking with a priest, Hastings? Your friends at Pomfret,
they're the ones who need a priest. You, on the other hand,
don't have any confessions you have to make.

HASTINGS

When I ran into this holy man, those men you mentioned did
come to mind, in fact. Are you headed to the Tower?

BUCKINGHAM

I shall return before your Lordship thence.

HASTINGS

Nay, like enough, for I stay dinner there.

BUCKINGHAM

(aside) And supper too, although thou know'st it not.—

120 Come, will you go?

HASTINGS

I'll wait upon your Lordship.

Exeunt

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 damned bloodsuckers.

I am, my lord. But I won't be there for long. I'll be off before you are.

HASTINGS

Yes, probably, because I'm staying for lunch.

BUCKINGHAM

(to himself) And for dinner, too, though you don't know it. (to HASTINGS) Come, are you going?

HASTINGS

I'll follow you, my lord.

They exit.

Act 3 Scene 3

RATCLIFFE, enters with armed guards. He leads **RIVERS**, **GREY**, and **VAUGHAN**, to death at Pomfret.

RIVERS

Sir Richard Ratcliffe, let me tell you this. Today you will witness a person die for truth, duty, and loyalty.

GREY

(to RATCLIFFE) God protect the prince from all of you. You're a group of damned bloodsuckers!

VAUGHAN

(to RATCLIFFE) You live that shall cry woe for this hereafter.

RATCLIFFE

Dispatch. The limit of your lives is out.

RIVERS

O Pomfret, Pomfret! O thou bloody prison,
10 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,
We give thee up our guiltless blood to drink.

GREY

15 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.
Then cursed she Hastings. O, remember, God,
20 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.

VAUGHAN

(to RATCLIFFE) You'll live to regret this.

RATCLIFFE

Hurry up. Your lives are over.

RIVERS

Oh, Pomfret, Pomfret! Oh, you bloody prison, fatal and threatening to noble lords! Within these guilty walls, Richard II was hacked to death. And now, to add more blood to its name, we're losing our innocent lives here.

GREY

Now Margaret's curse has fallen on our heads, for standing by and doing nothing when Richard stabbed her son.

RIVERS

She cursed Richard then. She cursed Buckingham then. She cursed Hastings then. Oh God, remember to hear her prayer for them, just as for us! But don't kill my sister and her royal sons, be satisfied, dear God, with our blood, which is being spilled unjustly, as you know.

RATCLIFFE

Make haste. The hour of death is expiate.

RIVERS

25 Come, Grey. Come, Vaughan. Let us all embrace.

They embrace

Farewell until we meet in heaven.

Exeunt

Hurry up. The hour of death is approaching.

RIVERS

Come, Grey. Come, Vaughan. Let's embrace (*They embrace*) and say goodbye until we meet again in heaven.

They all exit.

Act 3 Scene 4

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

BUCKINGHAM, STANLEY, HASTINGS, the bishop of **ELY**, **RATCLIFFE**, and **LOVELL**, enter with others and take their seats at a table.

HASTINGS

Now, noble lords, the reason we're meeting is to determine the day the prince will be crowned. In God's name, speak. When should the royal day be?

BUCKINGHAM

Is everything ready for that event?

STANLEY

It is. All we have to do is name the day.

ELY

Tomorrow's a good 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

ELY

In happy time here comes the duke himself.

RICHARD

My noble lords and cousins all, good morrow.

Who knows what the Lord Protector thinks? Who's closest to him?

ELY

You, I think, would best know what he's thinking.

BUCKINGHAM

We know each other's faces, but as for our thoughts, he doesn't know any more about my thinking than I do about yours or his—or you do about mine. Lord Hastings, you and he are close.

HASTINGS

Thank you. I know he holds me dear, but I haven't asked him about the coronation, and he hasn't told me. But you, my noble lords, may name a time, and I'll second it on the duke's behalf, which I don't think he'll mind.

RICHARD, enters.

ELY

Right on cue, here's the duke himself.

RICHARD

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,

My noble lords and relatives, good morning. I slept in. But I hope I didn't delay any important decisions.

BUCKINGHAM

If you hadn't shown up on cue, my lord, Lord Hastings was going to take your part—I mean, he was going to speak for you—in the crowning of the king.

RICHARD

No one may be bolder than my Lord Hastings. He knows me well and loves me well.—Ely, when I was last at your palace, I saw some great strawberries in your garden. I beg you, send someone to bring some of them.

ELY

Yes, my lord. With pleasure.

He Exits.

RICHARD

Buckingham, I need to have a word with you. (*drawing him aside*) Catesby has sounded Hastings out and found the prickly gentleman so opposed to our plan that he actually said he would die before he'd agree to have his "master's son," as he put it so devotedly, lose the crown.

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

BUCKINGHAM

Move to the other room, my lord. I'll come soon.

RICHARD exits, with BUCKINGHAM following him.

STANLEY

We have not yet set the coronation day. Tomorrow, in my opinion, is too soon. I myself am not as well-equipped as I would be if the day were put off a bit.

ELY returns.

ELY

Where is my lord, the duke of Gloucester? I have sent for the strawberries.

HASTINGS

Richard is looking cheerful today. You always know he's got some plan that pleases him when he says good morning with such gusto. I don't think there's a man under the sun who's worse at hiding his love or hate than Richard. You know his feelings immediately just by looking at his face.

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.

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

And what feelings did you see in his face today?

HASTINGS

That he's not angry with anyone here. If he were, he would have shown it.

STANLEY

I pray to God he isn't.

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM return.

RICHARD

Tell me, all of you, what punishment does a person deserve who conspires to kill me with witchcraft and who has already plagued my body with black magic?

HASTINGS

Because I love your Grace, I say that whoever the offenders are deserve to die.

RICHARD

Then see the evidence of their evil with your own eyes. *(he shows his arm)* Look how I've been bewitched! See how my arm has become like a withered tree-branch? This is the work

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!

of Edward's wife, that monstrous witch, who is in league with that tramp Shore. They have used witchcraft to harm me.

HASTINGS

If they have done this thing, my noble lord—

RICHARD

If? You lover of that damned whore, you're talking to me of "ifs"? You're a traitor.—Off with his head. By Saint Paul, I swear I won't eat lunch until I see him beheaded. Lovell and Ratcliffe, make sure it gets done. The rest of you who love me, come with me.

Everyone but HASTINGS, RATCLIFFE, and LOVELL exits.

HASTINGS

I pity England, but not myself. I was too foolish. I might have prevented this. Stanley dreamed the boar beheaded him, and I laughed and refused to flee with him. Three times today my horse stumbled and started when he looked in the direction of the Tower, as if he hated to carry me to this slaughterhouse. Oh, now I really need that priest who spoke to me today!

HASTINGS

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.

HASTINGS

105 O bloody Richard! Miserable England,
I prophesy the fearfull'st time to thee
That ever wretched age hath looked upon.—

HASTINGS

And I regret having bragged to the messenger about how my enemies were being butchered at Pomfret while I, as I said, was in good standing with Richard. Oh Margaret, Margaret, your heavy curse has now landed on poor Hastings's miserable head!

RATCLIFFE

Hurry up—the duke wants to eat his dinner. Make your confession short. He's eager to see your head.

HASTINGS

We spend more time seeking out the fleeting glories of this temporary world than looking to the permanent grace of God! Anyone who builds his hopes on air lives like a drunken sailor hanging on a mast, ready with every dizzy nod of his head to tumble to the bottom of the sea. The things we worry about, like good looks and possessions, aren't lasting, and they don't matter.

LOVELL

Come, come, hurry up. It's pointless to talk now.

HASTINGS

Oh bloody Richard! Miserable England, I foresee for you the most frightening time you have ever experienced.—Come, lead

Come, lead me to the block. Bear him my head.
They smile at me that shortly shall be dead.

Exeunt

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 enforcèd 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.

me to the block. Bring him my head. Those who smile at it will soon be dead themselves.

They all exit.

Act 3 Scene 5

RICHARD and BUCKINGHAM enter wearing rusty, hideous-looking armor.

RICHARD

Tell me, cousin, I need to know if you can shake like you've got a fever, turn pale all of a sudden, and stop speaking in the middle of a word—as if you were driven crazy with fear.

BUCKINGHAM

Oh please, I can imitate the best tragic actor around. I can speak and then look all around, and tremble, and start at a mere piece of straw as if I were paranoid. Frightening looks are also at my service, as are fake smiles. Anytime I need them, they're waiting to do my bidding. But has Catesby gone?

RICHARD

He has. But here he is, back with the mayor.

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's head

RICHARD

Be patient. They are friends, Ratcliffe and Lovell.

The LORD MAYOR and CATESBY enter.

BUCKINGHAM

Lord Mayor—

RICHARD

Watch out for the [drawbridge](#) over there!

BUCKINGHAM

Listen! A drum!

RICHARD

Catesby, look over the top of these walls to see if anyone's there.

CATESBY exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Lord Mayor, the reason we have sent—

RICHARD

Look behind you! Defend yourself! There are enemies here.

BUCKINGHAM

God defend and guard us innocents against them!

LOVELL and RATCLIFFE enter with HASTINGS's head.

RICHARD

Stay calm. They're 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 attainer of suspects.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, well, he was the covert'st sheltered traitor
That ever lived.—
35 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?

LOVELL

Here's the head of that notorious traitor, the dangerous and unsuspected Hastings.

RICHARD

I loved this man so much it makes me weep. I took him to be the plainest, most harmless Christian on earth. He was the book in which I recorded all of my most secret thoughts. He was so slick in covering over his plans that if it hadn't been for his love affair with Shore's wife, I would never have suspected him.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, well, he was the most covert traitor who ever lived.
Would you believe, if we hadn't caught him, this subtle traitor would have murdered the Lord of Gloucester and me in the council room today?

LORD MAYOR

He would have?

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.

BUCKINGHAM

50 I never looked for better at his hands
After he once fell in with Mistress Shore.
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.

RICHARD

What, do you think we're Turks or savages, instead of Christians? You think we would have disobeyed the law and proceeded to kill this villain if England's peace and our own lives hadn't been at stake?

LORD MAYOR

I hope nothing else like this ever happens to you! This man deserved his death. And you, my good lords, were right to warn other traitors from trying the same.

BUCKINGHAM

I didn't expect any better from him once he got involved with Mistress Shore. But we had decided that he shouldn't die until you were able to come witness his execution. (Which was prevented by the haste of our friends, Lovell and Ratcliffe here, who went against what we intended somewhat in their hurry to protect us). If you could have heard the traitor speak for himself and confess the exact way he planned to murder us, you could have told the citizens what terrible intentions he had, though now they're likely to misconstrue what we did and wail over 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 dutious 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

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 termed so.
80 Moreover, urge his hateful luxury

LORD MAYOR

But, my good lord, the words of you and Lord Buckingham are
as trustworthy to me as if I had seen and heard him speak
myself. And do not doubt, you honest, noble princes, that I'll let
our citizens know how fairly you proceeded in this case.

RICHARD

That is exactly why we wanted you here, your lordship—to
avoid the public carping and complaints.

BUCKINGHAM

But since you've come too late to see the execution as we
intended, at least let people know what you *hear* we intended.
And so, good Lord Mayor, we bid you goodbye.

The LORD MAYOR exits.

RICHARD

Follow him, Buckingham. He's traveling at a gallop to the
London meeting hall. There, as soon as you have a chance,
drop the hint that Edward's children are bastards. Tell the
citizens how Edward put to death a citizen just because the
citizen said he was going to make his own son "heir to the
crown"—when all the citizen meant was that he owned a tavern
called "the Crown" and was going to leave it to his son. And
then point out what a lech Edward was and what a bestial
appetite he had for women, which touched even the citizens'

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

own servants, daughters, and wives. There was no limit to what his lustful eye and savage heart would prey on. And, if you need to, approach the subject of me: tell them that when my mother became pregnant with the insatiable Edward, my noble father was fighting in France. With a little calculating, it's obvious that Edward is not in fact my father's child—not a surprising revelation if you consider how my father the noble duke looked nothing like this man. But only hint at this vaguely, because, as you know, my mother's still alive.

BUCKINGHAM

Don't worry, my lord, I'll be as eloquent as if the golden crown I'm pleading for were for myself. Goodbye, my lord.

RICHARD

If things go well, bring the crowd to [Baynard's](#) Castle, where I'll be surrounded by priests and learned bishops.

BUCKINGHAM

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

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 Eleven hours I have spent to write it over,

I'm off. Around three or four o'clock, look for news from the meeting hall.

BUCKINGHAM exits.

RICHARD

Lovell, go as fast as you can to Doctor Shaw. (*to RATCLIFFE*) Go to Friar Penker. Both of you, tell these men to meet me in less than an hour at Baynard's Castle.

LOWELL and **RADCLIFFE** exits.

Now I'll go inside and write out a secret order to keep Clarence's brats out of sight and to forbid anyone whatsoever from seeing King Edward's sons.

He exits.

Act 3 Scene 6

A **SCRIVENER** enters with a paper in his hand.

SCRIVENER

Here's the indictment of the good Lord Hastings, which has been written out in a clear hand, like any legal document, so it can be read aloud in public outside St. Paul's Cathedral. And look how well this sequence of events holds together: after Catesby brought the indictment to me last night, I spent eleven

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

hours copying it. The original took just as long to write out. So that's twenty-two hours. And yet five hours ago, Lord Hastings was alive, untouched, free, at liberty. What a backward world we live in! Why, who's so stupid that he can't see through this fraud? But who's so blind to the consequences of speaking out that he'll admit what he knows? The world is a bad place, where you can't speak what you know.

He exits.

Act 3 Scene 7

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;

RICHARD

So what did the citizens say?

BUCKINGHAM

It's incredible—they didn't say a word.

RICHARD

Did you mention that Edward's children are bastards?

BUCKINGHAM

I did. I talked about how he was engaged to [Lady Lucy](#), and how he was engaged to [Lady Bona](#) through the help of the

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

earl of Warwick. I spoke of the unquenchable greediness of Edward's desires and the way he forced himself on the wives of Londoners. I mentioned the way he punished people harshly for minor offenses. I said he was not the son of the noble duke of York, because your father was in France when he was conceived, which explains why he doesn't have anything in common with his father. And then I suggested that you were the spitting image of your father, both in the way you look and in the nobleness of your character. I went into all your victories in Scotland, your skill as a warrior, your wisdom in peacetime, your generosity, your goodness, and your exceptional modesty. Indeed, I left nothing out. And when my oration came to a close, I asked those who loved their country to cry, "God save Richard, England's royal king!"

RICHARD

And did they?

BUCKINGHAM

No, God help me, they didn't say a word. Like silent statues or stones that breathed, they just gazed at each other and turned as pale as the dead. When I saw this, I scolded them and asked the mayor what this stubborn silence meant. He said that the people weren't used to being spoken to except by the [Recorder](#). So I urged the Recorder to repeat my tale—you

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 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 descant.

And be not easily won to our requests.

50 Play the maid's part: still answer "nay," and take it.

RICHARD

know, "The duke of Buckingham said this, Buckingham meant that," but nothing on his own authority. When he was done, a few followers of my own at the far end of the hall hurled their caps in the air. Some ten voices cried, "God save King Richard!" I jumped on this slender opportunity and said, "Thank you, noble citizens and friends. This widespread applause and enthusiastic shouts make clear you stand behind Richard." And then I broke off and quickly came away.

RICHARD

What blocks of wood! They wouldn't say anything? Aren't the mayor and his fellow citizens coming?

BUCKINGHAM

The mayor is here at hand. Pretend you're afraid, my lord, and don't speak until you're pleaded with. And make sure to carry a prayer book in your hand and to stand between two priests, okay? Then I'll have the grounds to build a holy sermon about why you should be king. But don't be easily won over. Act like a virgin, always answering "No," but taking it in the end.

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.

I'm going now. If you're as good at pleading to them as I am at saying no to you, this will definitely come to a happy end.

A sound of knocking from offstage.

BUCKINGHAM

Hurry, go up to the roof. The Lord Mayor is knocking.

RICHARD exits.

The LORD MAYOR and CITIZENS enter.

Welcome, my lord. I'm twiddling my thumbs waiting for the duke to show up. I don't think he wants to be disturbed.

CATESBY enters.

Here comes his servant. Now, Catesby, what does your lord say to my request?

CATESBY

My lord, he asks that you please visit him tomorrow or the next day. He's inside in prayer, with two reverend fathers. He doesn't want to be disturbed in his holy work by any worldly requests.

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!

BUCKINGHAM**BUCKINGHAM**

Return to the gracious duke, good Catesby. Tell him that the mayor, some citizens, and I have come to confer with his grace in matters of great importance concerning the general good.

CATESBY

I'll tell him right away, my lord.

He exits.

BUCKINGHAM

Ah, my lord, this prince is nothing like Edward! He is not lolling in bed but on his knees in prayer. He's not enjoying himself with a couple of prostitutes but studying with two learned priests. He's not sleeping to fatten up his lazy body, but praying, to nourish his attentive soul. England would be lucky to have this virtuous prince as king. But I'm afraid we'll never get him to agree to be king.

LORD MAYOR

But God forbid he says 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.

I'm afraid he will. Here comes Catesby again.

CATESBY *returns.*

What's up, Catesby, what does your master say?

CATESBY

My lord, he wonders why you have assembled such troops of citizens to speak with him, since he had no idea they were coming. My lord, he's afraid you mean him harm.

BUCKINGHAM

I'm sorry my noble brother is suspicious of me. By God, I'm here because I love him. Return and tell him so.

CATESBY *exits.*

When devoutly religious men are praying, it's hard to draw them out of it, because they get lost in the wonder of their contemplation.

RICHARD enters overhead, between two bishops. CATESBY returns.

LORD MAYOR

See how he stands between 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**BUCKINGHAM**

Two props of virtue for a Christian prince, to prevent him from ever becoming vain. And, see, he has a prayer book in each hand, the signs of a holy man. Most gracious prince of the famous house of Plantagenet, pardon us for interrupting your righteous, Christian prayer. Please listen favorably to our request.

RICHARD

My lord, you don't need to apologize. I beg you to pardon me. I've been so intent on serving God that I've kept my friends waiting. In any case, what would you like?

BUCKINGHAM

Only what, I hope, will please God above and all good men on this island, which currently has no king.

RICHARD

I suspect that I have committed some offence to the city and you have come to reprimand me for not knowing better.

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,

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,

You have, my lord. I hope you'll make up for it!

RICHARD

Why else would I live in a Christian country, if I can't ask
forgiveness for my faults?

BUCKINGHAM

Then you should know that we take fault with your resigning
the supreme seat, the majestic throne, the sceptered office, of
your ancestors—the power and greatness that destiny and
your noble birth have handed you—to the wrong person. You
aren't respecting the lineage of your royal family. You're lost in
sleepy thoughts, and we have come to wake you to our
country's needs. This noble island has been compromised. She
is scarred by the infamous deeds of King Edward IV. Her royal
stock has been corrupted and nearly lost. We want that royalty
remembered again. We heartily beg you, in all your goodness,
to take upon yourself the responsibility and rule of this land,
not merely as a servant, substitute, or other lowly agent of the
king, but as the king himself. It is your birthright to be king. It's
for this reason that we are here—the citizens of England and
your devoted friends. We strongly urge you on.

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,
Definitively 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.

RICHARD

I can't tell which is the better course of action, to leave in silence or to scold you. If I don't answer, perhaps you'll think I'm accepting the heavy responsibility you foolishly want to impose on me. But if I do speak and refuse your request, then I'm guilty of reprimanding my friends, who have been faithful and loving toward me.
So, I'll speak to make clear I don't want the crown but also that I am grateful to you. Here is my definitive answer: thank you for your love, but I'm going to have to turn down your weighty request because I don't deserve to be king. First of all, even if all the obstacles were eliminated and my path led straight to the crown—if it were truly my birthright—I would rather hide from my greatness than hide inside the greatness of the position itself and be smothered by it. My spirit is poor, and I have so many terrible defects that as king I would be like a little boat tossed about on a mighty sea. So, thank God, there is no real need for me, as I wouldn't be able to help you much. The royal tree has left us other fruit, which, with time, will do just fine on the throne and make us all happy as king, I'm sure.

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 considerèd.
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,

Someone other than I has the right and the good fortune to be made king. God forbid that I snatch the crown from him.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, what you've said makes clear you have a conscience, but your objections are trivial, given the circumstances. You say that Prince Edward is your brother's son. We agree, but not by your brother's wife. King Edward was going to marry Lady Lucy—your mother can vouch for that—and then he was betrothed to Bona, the King of France's sister-in-law. But both of these were put off by Elizabeth Grey, a careworn mother of many children who had once been a beauty but was now a stressed-out widow

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 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-derivèd 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

long past her prime. Nevertheless, under pretence of asking a favor of him, she attracted his lustful eye and seduced him so thoroughly that he completely debased himself, committing adultery with her. It resulted in this Edward, whom we're polite enough to call "Prince." Out of respect for the living, I'll restrain myself from telling you everything. But, my good lord, if you don't care about this country, at least use your own pure lineage to rescue us from the current corruption of the royal line.

LORD MAYOR

Yes, my good lord, your citizens beg you.

BUCKINGHAM

Don't refuse the love we offer you.

CATESBY

Oh, make them joyful! Grant their law-abiding request!

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.

Alas, why would you heap all these responsibilities on me? I am unfit to rule and to be king. Please, don't take it badly, but I cannot and will not give in to you.

BUCKINGHAM

Perhaps you refuse our request out of love for your brother's son. You don't want to depose the child. We know how tender your heart is and what gentle, kind, womanly feelings you have for your relatives, as well as for people from all walks of life. But listen, if you won't become king, we'll just get someone else, to the disgrace and ruin of your family. We will not have your brother's son as king. On this note, we're leaving. Come, citizens. Damn it, I'm not going to beg anymore!

RICHARD

Oh, please don't swear, my lord of Buckingham.

BUCKINGHAM exits with **CITIZENS** and **LORD MAYOR**.

CATESBY

Call them back, my lord, and accept their request. If you refuse it, the whole country will regret 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.

BUCKINGHAM

Then I salute you with this royal title:

RICHARD

Would you tie me to a whole world of worries? Well, call them back again. I am not made of stone; I am affected by all these kind pleas, though it goes against my conscience and my soul.

BUCKINGHAM and the rest return.

Buckingham, my brother, and you wise, serious men, since you intend to force me to take responsibility for these changing times, whether I want to or not, I'm going to have to be brave and endure the load. But if this imposition you've put on me happens to result in dark scandal or ugly reproach, the fact that you forced me to accept this should clear me from blame. God knows, and you may have noticed, I'm not to eager to take on this job.

LORD MAYOR

God bless your Grace! We understand you're just doing it for us, and we'll be sure to say so.

RICHARD

If you say that, you'll only be telling the truth.

BUCKINGHAM

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

Enter **QUEEN ELIZABETH**, **DUCHESS** of York, and **DORSET** at one door; **ANNE**, duchess of Gloucester with **CLARENCE**'s young daughter at another door

DUCHESS

Then I salute you with this royal title: long live Richard, England's worthy king!

ALL

Amen.

BUCKINGHAM

Will you be crowned tomorrow?

RICHARD

Whenever you want, since you're the one who wants it.

BUCKINGHAM

Tomorrow, then, we will wait on your Grace. Now we'll take our leave—joyfully.

RICHARD

(*to the bishops*) Come, let us get back to praying.—Farewell, my cousin; farewell, noble friends.

They all exit.

Act 4 Scene 1

QUEEN ELIZABETH, **DUCHESS** of York, and **DORSET** enter on one side, and **ANNE**, the duchess of Gloucester, enters on the other, leading Clarence's young daughter, Lady Margaret Plantagenet.

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

No farther than the Tower, and, as I guess,
Upon the like devotion as yourselves,
10 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,
How doth the prince and my young son of York?

BRAKENBURY

Who's this? My granddaughter, with her kind aunt, the duchess of Gloucester, leading her by the hand? Now, on my life, the young child must be headed to the Tower to greet the young princes, whom she adores. Daughter, how nice to see you.

ANNE

Good afternoon!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The same to you, good sister. Where are you going?

ANNE

Just to the Tower—I'm guessing, for the same reason you are: to salute the noble princes who are staying there.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Yes, kind sister. We can all go together.

BRAKENBURY enters.

And here comes the warden, just in time. Officer, please tell us, if you will, how are the prince and my little son, York?

BRAKENBURY

15 Right well, dear madam. By your patience,
I may not suffer you to visit them.
The king hath strictly charged the contrary.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The king? Who's that?

BRAKENBURY

I mean, the Lord Protector.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The Lord protect him from that kingly title!
20 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

Their aunt I am in law, in love their mother.
Then bring me to their sights. I'll bear thy blame
25 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

They're just fine, my dear madam. But I'm sorry—I'm not allowed to let you visit them. The king has strictly forbidden it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The king? Who's that?

BRAKENBURY

I meant to say the Lord Protector.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The Lord keep him from the title of king! Richard has set boundaries between my love and theirs? I am their mother. Who's going to keep me from them?

DUCHESS

I am their father's mother. I will see them.

ANNE

I am their aunt, and I love them like a mother. So take me to see them. Officer, I'll take the responsibility from you, and the blame too.

BRAKENBURY

No, madam, no. I can't do this. I am bound by oath, so please forgive me.

He exits.

Enter Lord STANLEY, earl of Derby

STANLEY

Let me but meet you ladies one hour hence,
And I'll salute your Grace of York as mother
30 And reverend looker-on, of two fair queens.

(*to ANNE*)

Come, madam, you must straight to Westminster,
There to be crownèd Richard's royal queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, cut my lace asunder,
35 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

(*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) Be of good cheer, mother. How fares
your Grace?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

O Dorset, speak not to me. Get thee gone.
40 Death and destruction dogs thee at thy heels.
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.

Lord STANLEY, earl of Derby, enters.

STANLEY

In just an hour from now, Duchess of York, I'll be saluting you
as the mother of two beautiful queens. (*to ANNE*) Come,
madam, you must go straight to Westminster Abbey, where
you will be crowned Richard's queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, cut my bodice-staps so that my pent-up heart can have
some room to breathe, or I'll faint from this deadly news!

ANNE

Cruel, cruel news!

DORSET

(*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) Cheer up, mother. How are you
feeling?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, Dorset, don't waste your time talking to me. Leave. Death
and destruction are following at your heels. Your mother's
name has become a threat to her own children. If you want to
outrun death, go cross the sea to France and stay with
[Richmond](#), out of the reach of hell. Go, get out of here, get out

Go, hie thee, hie thee from this slaughterhouse,
45 Lest thou increase the number of the dead
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.
50 You shall have letters from me to my son
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!
55 A cockatrice hast thou hatched to the world,
Whose unavoided eye is murderous.

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
60 Of golden metal that must round my brow
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."

of this slaughterhouse. Otherwise you'll just increase the number of the dead, and make me die the slave of Margaret's curse, no longer a mother, a wife, or England's queen.

STANLEY

Madam, your advice is wise and caring.—Dorset, take advantage of the time you have. I'll write to my stepson Richmond on your behalf, so that he'll meet you on the way. But don't delay.

DUCHESS

O, this evil wind that spreads nothing but misery. O, my cursed womb—it's a deathbed, really, since Richard came out of it. It has hatched a [cockatrice](#), whose gaze kills whatever it lands on.

STANLEY

(*to ANNE*) Come, madam, come. I was sent in a hurry.

ANNE

I go unwillingly. I wish to God that the golden crown that I'll have to wear were red-hot steel and burned me straight through to the brain! I wish I could be anointed queen with deadly venom, not oil, and that I would die before anyone even had a chance to say, "God save the Queen!"

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Go, go, poor soul, I envy not thy glory.

65 To feed my humor, wish thyself no harm.

ANNE

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

70 And that dear saint which then I weeping followed—

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;

75 And be thy wife, if any be so mad,

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

80 Grossly grew captive to his honey words

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,

85 But with his timorous dreams was still awaked.

Besides, he hates me for my father Warwick,

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Go, go, poor soul. I don't envy your position. If you want to make me happy, don't wish yourself harm.

ANNE

No? Why? The man I'm married to now came to me when he'd barely washed the blood off his hands from killing my first husband, that angel, as well as my husband's sainted father, whose corpse I was following to burial. I'm telling you, when I looked at Richard's face, this is what I wished: "I want you to be cursed for making me a widow so young. And when you get married, let sorrow haunt your bed. And I hope your wife—if any woman is crazy enough to marry you—is more miserable about the fact that you're alive as you have made me by killing my husband!" And then what? Before I even had time to repeat the curse, my woman's heart was taken captive by his sweet, slick words. I became the victim of my own curse. Since I married him, I have not had one hour's sleep in his bed. Every night I'm awakened by his [terrified](#) dreams. It doesn't matter if I sleep, though. He hates me because of who my father is. He will, no doubt, get rid of me soon.

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

90 Farewell, thou woeful welcomer of glory.

ANNE

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.

95 (*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

100 Stay, yet look back with me unto the Tower.—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Poor dear, goodbye. I pity your situation.

ANNE

No more than I do yours.

DORSET

Goodbye. I know you're unhappy with the glory of becoming queen.

ANNE

(*to ELIZABETH*) And goodbye to you, the poor soul who has to leave that glory behind.

DUCHESS

(*to DORSET*) Go to Richmond, and good luck. (*to ANNE*) You go to Richard. I hope good angels will protect you. (*to QUEEN ELIZABETH*) You take sanctuary in the Abbey and think good thoughts for us. I will go to my grave, where I can look forward to peace and rest. I have witnessed eighty-odd years of sorrow; for each hour of joy I've experienced, I've suffered a full week of misery.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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
105 For tender princes, use my babies well.
So foolish sorrows bids your stones farewell.

Wait. Look back at the Tower with me. Please, you ancient building, take pity on those tender babes locked inside your walls by envious rivals! You are such a rough cradle for such little pretty ones. You are a rude, ragged nurse and an old, sullen playmate for such tender princes. Please treat my babies well. I know I must look foolish saying goodbye to a building, but I'm aching with sorrow.

Exeunt

They all exit.

Act 4 Scene 2

Sound a sennet. Enter RICHARD in pomp; BUCKINGHAM, CATESBY, RATCLIFFE, LOVELL, a page, and others

Trumpets play. RICHARD enters, already crowned and dressed as a king. BUCKINGHAM, CATESBY, a PAGE, and others enter with him.

RICHARD

Stand all apart.—Cousin of Buckingham.

Others move aside

RICHARD

Everyone stand aside.—Cousin Buckingham.

Everyone moves aside.

BUCKINGHAM

My gracious sovereign.

BUCKINGHAM

My gracious king.

RICHARD

Give me thy hand.

RICHARD

Give me your hand.

Here he ascendeth the throne. Sound trumpets

RICHARD ascends the throne with BUCKINGHAM at his side.

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

Because of your advice and your help, I have a high position now. But will I wear these honors for only a day or will I enjoy them for a long time?

BUCKINGHAM

Let them last forever.

RICHARD

Oh Buckingham, now I'm going to test to see if you're truly made of gold. Young Prince Edward is still alive—what do you think I'm going to say next?

BUCKINGHAM

Go on, my loving lord.

RICHARD

Why, Buckingham, I say I want to be king.

BUCKINGHAM

Why, you are king, your highness.

RICHARD

Ha! Am I king? I guess I am. But Edward is still alive.

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.
Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,
20 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.
Say, have I thy consent that they shall die?

BUCKINGHAM

25 Give me some little breath, some pause, dear lord,
Before I positively speak in this.
I will resolve you herein presently.

Exit

CATESBY

(aside to the other attendants)

The king is angry. See, he gnaws his lip.

RICHARD

30 (aside) I will converse with iron-witted fools

Oh, how bitter it is that Edward—the real "true, noble prince"—should still be alive! Cousin, you didn't used to be so thickheaded. Shall I put it plainly? I want the bastards dead. And I want it done right away. What do you say? Speak now and to the point.

BUCKINGHAM

Your Grace can do whatever he wants.

RICHARD

Tut, tut, you've become rather icy. Your friendliness toward me seems to be freezing over. Tell me, do I have your consent to kill them?

BUCKINGHAM

Give me a little breathing space, my lord, a little pause to think. I'll let you know my answer shortly.

He exits.

CATESBY

(so only the attendant nearest him can hear) The king is angry.
See, he bites his lip.

RICHARD

And unrespective boys. None are for me
That look into me with considerate eyes.
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.—
Boy!

PAGE

35 (*coming forward*) My lord?

RICHARD

Know'st thou not any whom corrupting gold
Will tempt unto a close exploit of death?

PAGE

I know a discontented gentleman
Whose humble means match not his haughty spirit.
40 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

I partly know the man. Go, call him hither, boy

Exit PAGE

(*to himself*) I only want to deal with stupid fools and careless boys. I have no use for people who look at me insightfully. Ambitious Buckingham grows much too circumspect. Boy!

PAGE

My lord?

RICHARD

Do you know anyone who would kill someone for money?

PAGE

My lord, I know one unhappy gentleman who has more pride than money. Money talks, and would very likely get him to do anything.

RICHARD

What's his name?

PAGE

His name is Tyrrel, my lord.

RICHARD

I know the man a bit. Go, bring him here, boy.

The PAGE exits.

(aside) The deep-revolving witty Buckingham
45 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

How now, Lord Stanley, what's the news?

STANLEY

Know, my long lord,
50 The marquess Dorset, as I hear, is fled
To Richmond, in the parts where he abides.

He walks aside

RICHARD

Come hither, Catesby. Rumor it abroad
That Anne my wife is very grievous sick.
I will take order for her keeping close.
55 Inquire me out some mean poor gentleman,
Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter.
The boy is foolish, and I fear not him.
Look how thou dream'st! I say again, give out
That Anne my queen is sick and like to die.
60 About it, for it stands me much upon
To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me.

(*to himself*) The thoughtful, witty Buckingham will no longer be privy to my innermost thoughts. Has he held out for me for so long and without a moment's doubt only to suddenly need some "breathing room"? Well, so be it.

STANLEY enters.

Look who's here! What's the news with you?

STANLEY

You should know, my loving lord, I've heard that the marquess Dorset has fled to Brittany, to the earl of Richmond.

He stands aside.

RICHARD

Come here, Catesby. Spread the rumor abroad that Anne, my wife, is very sick. I will make sure she's kept out of view. And find a poverty stricken gentleman who I can marry straightaway to Clarence's daughter. Clarence's son is dull-witted, so I'm not worried about him. Look at you, standing there in a stupor! I repeat, spread the rumor that Anne, my wife, is sick and likely to die. Hurry up because it's absolutely crucial that I destroy anything that may damage my position.

Exit CATESBY

(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—
65 Uncertain way of gain. But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin.
Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye.

Enter PAGE with TYRREL

Is thy name Tyrrel?

TYRREL

James Tyrrel, and your most obedient subject.

RICHARD

70 Art thou indeed?

TYRREL

Prove me, my gracious sovereign.

RICHARD

Dar'st thou resolve to kill a friend of mine?

TYRREL

Please you. But I had rather kill two enemies.

RICHARD

CATESBY exits.

(to himself) I must get married to my brother's daughter . Otherwise, my kingdom stands on glass. Murdering her brothers and then marrying her isn't the most foolproof way to secure my position. But I'm steeped so deep in blood by now that one sin has to follow the next. I have no tears of pity for anyone.

The PAGE returns with TYRREL.

Are you Tyrrel?

TYRREL

James Tyrrel—and your most obedient subject.

RICHARD

Are you indeed?

TYRREL

Test me, my blessed king.

RICHARD

Do you dare kill a friend of mine?

TYRREL

Yes, my lord, but I'd rather kill two enemies.

RICHARD

Why then, thou hast it. Two deep enemies,
Foes to my rest, and my sweet sleep's disturbers,
75 Are they that I would have thee deal upon.
Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower.

TYRREL

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

80 Go, by this token. Rise, and lend thine ear.

He whispers

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

Well, that's what you get to do. Two great enemies, in fact, enemies to my peace of mind. Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower.

TYRREL

Give me access to them, and soon you won't have to worry about them anymore.

RICHARD

That's music to my ears. Come here, Tyrrel.

TYRREL approaches RICHARD and kneels.

By this token, you'll be admitted to their cell. Get up and listen to me.

RICHARD whispers to TYRREL.

That's all there is to it. As soon as the deed is done, you will be in my favor and I will promote you.

TYRREL

I'll do it right away.

He exits.

BUCKINGHAM returns.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I have considered in my mind
85 The late request that you did sound me in.

RICHARD

Well, let that rest. Dorset is fled to Richmond.

BUCKINGHAM

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,
90 For which your honor and your faith is pawned—
Th' earldom of Hereford and the moveables
Which you promisèd I shall possess.

RICHARD

Stanley, look to your wife. If she convey
Letters to Richmond, you shall answer it.

BUCKINGHAM

95 What says your Highness to my just request?

RICHARD

I do remember me, Henry the Sixth

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I have thought over the request you just made of me.

RICHARD

Well, it doesn't matter anymore. Dorset has fled to the earl of Richmond.

BUCKINGHAM

I heard the news, my lord.

RICHARD

Stanley, Richmond is your wife's son. Get information from her.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, I'd want to have the gift you promised me on your honor: the earldom of Hereford and all the possessions that go with it.

RICHARD

Stanley, pay attention to your wife's doings. If she sends any letters to Richmond, you will be accountable to me for it.

BUCKINGHAM

What do you say, your Highness, about my just request?

RICHARD

Did prophesy that Richmond should be king,
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
A king, perhaps—

BUCKINGHAM

100 My lord—

RICHARD

How chance the prophet could not at that time
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,
105 The mayor in courtesy showed me the castle
And called it Rougemont, at which name I started,
Because a bard of Ireland told me once
I should not live long after I saw Richmond.

BUCKINGHAM

My Lord—

RICHARD

110 Ay, what's o'clock?

BUCKINGHAM

I am thus bold to put your Grace in mind

As I remember, Henry the Sixth prophesied that Richmond
would be king when Richmond was only a foolish little boy. A
king, perhaps—

BUCKINGHAM

My lord—

RICHARD

How is it that the prophet didn't tell me at the time that I would
kill him?

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, your promise of the earldom—

RICHARD

Richmond! The last time I was in Exeter, the mayor kindly
showed me the castle there and called it "[Rougemont](#)." The
name startled me because an Irish poet once told me that I
would die soon after seeing "Richmond."

BUCKINGHAM

My lord!

RICHARD

Yes, what time is it?

BUCKINGHAM

I'm reminding your grace what you promised me.

Of what you promised me.

RICHARD

Well, but what's o'clock?

BUCKINGHAM

Upon the stroke of ten.

RICHARD

115 Well, let it strike.

BUCKINGHAM

Why let it strike?

RICHARD

Because that, like a jack, thou keep'st the stroke
Betwixt thy begging and my meditation.
I am not in the giving vein today.

BUCKINGHAM

120 Why then, resolve me whether you will or no.

RICHARD

Thou troublest me; I am not in the vein.

Exeunt all but BUCKINGHAM

BUCKINGHAM

RICHARD

Well, but what time is it?

BUCKINGHAM

It's almost ten o'clock.

RICHARD

Well, let it strike ten then.

BUCKINGHAM

Why "let it strike"?

RICHARD

Because you're like the lowborn fellow who strikes the bell—
you keep interrupting my thoughts. I am not in the giving mood
today.

BUCKINGHAM

Well, then, let me know whether you will give me the earldom
some other time.

RICHARD

You're bothering me. I'm not in the mood.

Everyone except BUCKINGHAM exits.

BUCKINGHAM

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
125 To Brecknock, while my fearful head is on!

Exit

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;

Is this really happening? Does he reward my dedicated service with such deep contempt? Did I work to make him king for this? Oh, let me remember what happened to Hastings and hurry to [Brecknock](#) while I still have my head on my shoulders!

He exits.

Act 4 Scene 3

TYRREL enters.

TYRREL

The tyrant's bloody request has been met. It was the most ruthless massacre this country has ever been guilty of. Dighton and Forrest, whom I hired to perform the butchery, are used to killing people, the bloody dogs. But they melted with tenderness and human compassion, weeping like children, when they described what they'd done. "The tender babes lay like this," said Dighton. "Like this," said Forrest, "with their innocent white arms around each other. Their lips, like four red roses on a stalk, touched. A prayer book lay on their pillow, which" said Forrest, "almost made me change my mind. But, oh, the devil"—there he stopped talking and Dighton took up where he left off: "We smothered the perfect, most sweet work of nature." The two men were both destroyed by remorse. They couldn't speak. So I left them to bring the news to the murderous king. And here he comes.

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

And buried, gentle Tyrrel?

TYRREL

RICHARD enters.

Here he comes.—Health to you, my king.

RICHARD

Kind Tyrrel, will your news make me happy?

TYRREL

If my doing what you told me to makes you happy, then be happy, because I did it.

RICHARD

But did you see them dead?

TYRREL

I did, my lord.

RICHARD

And buried, noble Tyrrel?

TYRREL

The chaplain of the Tower hath buried them,
30 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.
Meantime, but think how I may do thee good,
And be inheritor of thy desire.
35 Farewell till then.

TYRREL

I humbly take my leave.

Exit TYRREL

RICHARD

The son of Clarence have I pent up close,
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.
40 Now, for I know the Breton Richmond aims
At young Elizabeth, my brother's daughter,
And by that knot looks proudly on the crown,
To her go I, a jolly thriving wooer.

Enter RATCLIFFE

RATCLIFFE

The Tower's chaplain has buried them, but to tell you the truth,
I don't know where.

RICHARD

Tyrrel, come back shortly after dinner and tell me the details of
their deaths. In the meantime, think about how I can do you
good and give you what you want. See you soon.

TYRREL

I humbly say goodbye.

TYRREL exits.

RICHARD

I've locked up Clarence's son and matched his daughter with a
poor fellow. Edward's sons have been carried off by the angels
and Anne, my wife, has bid good night to the world. Now I go, a
jolly, thriving wooer, to marry my brother Edward's young
daughter, Elizabeth, because I know Richmond has his eye on
her. He wants to win the crown by way of marrying her.

RATCLIFFE enters.

RATCLIFFE

My lord!

RICHARD

45 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,
Is in the field, and still his power increaseth.

RICHARD

Ely with Richmond troubles me more near
50 Than Buckingham and his rash-levied strength.
Come, I have learned that fearful commenting
Is leaden servitor to dull delay;
Delay leads impotent and snail-paced beggary;
Then fiery expedition be my wing,
55 Jove's Mercury, and herald for a king.
Go, muster men. My counsel is my shield.
We must be brief when traitors brave the field.

Exeunt

Enter old QUEEN MARGARET

QUEEN MARGARET

So now prosperity begins to mellow

My lord!

RICHARD

Is the news good or bad that you enter without knocking?

RATCLIFFE

Bad news, my lord. The Bishop of Ely has fled to Richmond,
and Buckingham, backed by a hardy Welsh army, is on the
march. His army is growing.

RICHARD

Ely joining Richmond troubles me more than Buckingham and
his quickly assembled army. Come, I've heard that frightened
analysis only serves to delay action, and delay can lead to ruin.
So my method is going to be to move as quickly as fire. Come,
let's gather an army. The best strategy is to head right to the
battlefield. When traitors challenge us to fight, it's best to act
fast.

They exit.

Act 4 Scene 4

Old QUEEN MARGARET enters.

QUEEN MARGARET

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.

QUEEN MARGARET

15 Hover about her; say that right for right
Hath dimmed your infant morn to agèd night.

DUCHESS

So many miseries have crazed my voice
That my woe-wearied tongue is still and mute.
Edward Plantagenet, why art thou dead?

So now the good times have ripened and grown rotten. I've lurked in the shadows here to watch the downfall of my enemies. I've been watching the terrible prologue to a scene that I hope will prove dark and tragic. I'll head to France soon. It's time to hide, wretched Margaret. Who's coming?

QUEEN ELIZABETH and the DUCHESS of York enter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, my poor princes! Ah, my tender babes, my flowers who didn't even get a chance to bloom. If your gentle souls are still flying in the air and have not yet landed where they will remain forever, hover around me with your airy wings and hear your mother's lament.

QUEEN MARGARET

Hover about her and tell her she got what she deserved, with her children dead before their time.

DUCHESS

I've been crazed with so many miseries that my tongue has tired of lamenting and gone mute. Edward Plantagenet, why are you 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,
Brief abstract and record of tedious days,
30 Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,
Unlawfully made drunk with innocent blood.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

(*sitting down beside her*)

Ah, that thou wouldst as soon afford a grave
As thou canst yield a melancholy seat,
35 Then would I hide my bones, not rest them here.
O, who hath any cause to mourn but we?

QUEEN MARGARET

(*to herself*) One Plantagenet pays for the other. One Edward dies to pay a debt for the other Edward who died.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Will you abandon such gentle lambs, God, and throw them to the wolves? Have you ever slept before while such a terrible deed was done?

QUEEN MARGARET

(*to herself*) Sure—when my husband, holy Harry , died and when my sweet son died.

DUCHESS

(*sitting down*) Sight has gone blind, life is as dead as a ghost. This is a mournful scene—it's a shame to the world, when someone like me, who should have died long ago, still lives. As a short summary and record of an unbearable life, I'll settle my restless bones on England's lawful ground (*sitting down*), which broke the law when it got drunk on the blood of the innocent!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

(*sitting down beside her*) Oh, if only the earth would offer me not just a seat for mourning but a grave. Then I would bury myself, not just rest my bones. Oh, who has any reason to mourn except us?

QUEEN MARGARET

(joining them) If ancient sorrow be most reverend,
Give mine the benefit of seigniory,
And let my griefs frown on the upper hand.

40 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.
Thou hadst an Edward till a Richard killed him;

45 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
Then forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
50 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,
That reigns in gallèd eyes of weeping souls;
55 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

QUEEN MARGARET

If the oldest grief is the most revered, then mine should have
the most weight here. Let my sorrow have the upper hand. If
you can allow for comparison (*sitting down with them*), consider
your losses next to mine. I had an Edward till a Richard killed
him, and I had a Harry till a Richard killed him. On your side,
you had an Edward till a Richard killed him, and you had the
young Richard, York, till a Richard killed him. So, I guess we're
equal.

DUCHESS

I had a Richard too—namely, my husband—and you killed him.
I had my son Rutland, and you helped kill him.

QUEEN MARGARET

You had a Clarence, too, and Richard killed him. Your womb let
loose a hellhound that hunts us all to death. That dog, who
was born with sharp teeth for lapping up the blood of lambs,
who had teeth before he even had eyes, is the world's worst
tyrant, making the eyes of a whole kingdom red with weeping.
He destroys God's handiwork and will send us to our graves.
Oh righteous God, how can I thank you enough that this meat-
eating mutt preys on his mother's children and forces her to
join others in their grief!

Preys on the issue of his mother's body

60 And makes her pew-fellow with others' moan!

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,

And now I cloy me with beholding it.

65 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.

Thy Clarence he is dead that stabbed my Edward,

70 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,

Only reserved their factor to buy souls

75 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.

Cancel his bond of life, dear God I pray,

80 That I may live to say, "The dog is dead."

DUCHESS

O Harry's wife, do not triumph in my sorrow! With God as my witness, I swear I have wept for yours.

QUEEN MARGARET

Bear with me. I am hungry for revenge, and now I plan to gorge myself on it. Your son Edward, who stabbed my son Edward, is dead. To even the balance, your grandson Edward is also dead, with young York thrown in because both your grandsons aren't equal to my one son. Your Clarence, who stabbed my Edward, is also dead. And the audience to this insane play—the adulterer Hastings, as well as Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey—have been sent early to their graves. Richard, a fiendish spy for hell itself, still lives, but only long enough to buy souls to send below. Soon, very soon, he will meet his ghastly and well deserved end.

When he dies, the earth will gape open, hell will burn hotter, devils will roar, and saints will pray to get him out of here fast. I pray that God ends his life before I die, so I can 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

I called thee then "vain flourish of my fortune."
85 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,
A mother only mocked with two fair babes,
90 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.
Where is thy husband now? Where be thy brothers?
95 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?
Decline all this, and see what now thou art:
100 For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
For queen, a very caitiff crowned with care;
For she that scorned at me, now scorned of me;

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, you prophesied that the time would come when I would want your help in cursing that humpbacked spider, that hideous toad!

QUEEN MARGARET

Back then, I called you "a poor, imitation queen," a badly reproduced copy of what I was, a pretty prologue for the tragedy that was about to follow, a woman who was lifted high only to be hurled down to hell, a mother only teased with two beautiful children, who would soon die. I said you were a mere shadow of what a queen once was, a garish target to be aimed at again and again, an empty symbol of dignity without any substance, a mockery of a queen only there to fill in a role. And I was right, because where's your husband now? Your brothers? Your two sons? Your source of joy? Who kneels at your feet now and says, "God save the Queen?" What noblemen are bowing and scraping to flatter you now? And where is your throng of followers? Once you've laid out all of these losses, it's clear what's left. In place of a happy wife, there's a miserable widow. Instead of a joyful mother, here's a woman who cries at the mention of her children. For one who bestows favors on others, here's one who has to beg for favors. Instead of a queen, we have a poor woman with a crown of worries. She who mocked me now is mocked by me. She who once ordered everyone about is now obeyed by no one. Your

For she being feared of all, now fearing one;
105 For she commanding all, obeyed of none.
Thus hath the course of justice whirled about
And left thee but a very prey to time,
Having no more but thought of what thou wast
To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
110 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,
From which even here I slip my weary head
And leave the burthen of it all on thee.
115 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,
And teach me how to curse mine enemies.

QUEEN MARGARET

Forbear to sleep the nights, and fast the days;
120 Compare dead happiness with living woe;
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were,
And he that slew them fouler than he is.
Bettering thy loss makes the bad causer worse.
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

fortune has fallen. Now you have only the memory of what you were, which tortures you when you consider what you've become.

You once stole my position; now you get to have the grief that goes with it. Now like an ox, you carry half my heavy burden of grief—here, I'll give you the rest. Farewell, York's wife. Goodbye, queen of tragic misfortune. Your English sorrows will make me smile in France.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You who are so skilled in cursing, stay awhile and teach me how to curse my enemies.

QUEEN MARGARET

Don't sleep at night, and don't eat during the day. Compare what you've lost with what you suffer now. Remember your children as being sweeter than they actually were, and think of the man who killed them as worse than he is. Making your loss greater makes the person who caused it worse. Think like this all day, and you'll learn how to curse.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

125 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

Windy attorneys to their clients' woes,

Airy successors of intestate joys,

130 Poor breathing orators of miseries,

Let them have scope, though what they will impart

Help nothing else, yet do they ease the heart.

DUCHESS

If so, then be not tongue-tied. Go with me,

And in the breath of bitter words let's smother

135 My damnèd son that thy two sweet sons smothered.

A trumpet sounds

The trumpet sounds. Be copious in exclaims.

They rise

My words are dull. Enliven them with yours!

QUEEN MARGARET

Your misery will make them sharp and piercing like mine.

She exits.

DUCHESS

What good does it do to respond to catastrophe with a lot of words?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Words are a lot of useless breath, like lawyers who won't stop arguing for their sad clients, like a worthless inheritance, or like poor speech-makers who won't stop speaking. But give words a chance. Though they won't help in any other way, at least they make us feel better.

DUCHESS

If that's true, then don't be tongue-tied. Come with me, and let's smother my fiendish son—who smothered your two sweet sons—in bitter words.

A trumpet plays.

I hear his battle drums. Don't stint on your words.

They rise

Enter King RICHARD and his train, including CATESBY

RICHARD

Who intercepts my expedition?

DUCHESS

O, she that might have intercepted thee,
By strangling thee in her accursèd womb,

140 From all the slughters, wretch, that thou hast done.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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?

145 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

Where is gentle Rivers, Vaughan, Grey?

DUCHESS

Where is kind Hastings?

RICHARD

150 A flourish, trumpets! Strike alarum, drums!

King RICHARD enters, with his followers, including CASTEBY.

RICHARD

Who's blocking the way?

DUCHESS

The woman who might have blocked you from all the murders
you've committed by strangling you in her cursed womb.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Are you hiding your forehead with a golden crown, when, if
there was any justice in this world, it should be branded with
the murders you committed—your slaughter of the prince who
held that crown, and of my sons and my brothers? Tell me, you
villainous lowlife, where are my children?

DUCHESS

You toad, where is your brother Clarence and his son, little Ned
Plantagenet?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Where are the noble Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey?

DUCHESS

Where is kind Hastings?

RICHARD

Let not the heavens hear these telltale women
Rail on the Lord's anointed. Strike, I say!

Flourish. Alarums

Either be patient and entreat me fair,
Or with the clamorous report of war

155 Thus will I drown your exclamations.

DUCHESS

Art thou my son?

RICHARD

Ay, I thank God, my father, and yourself.

DUCHESS

Then patiently hear my impatience.

RICHARD

Madam, I have a touch of your condition,
160 Which cannot brook the accent of reproof.

DUCHESS

O, let me speak!

RICHARD

Do then, but I'll not hear.

Play, trumpets! A call to arms, drums! Don't let the heavens
hear these chattery women abuse the Lord's anointed king.
Play, I say!

Trumpet and drums play military music.

Either be calm and polite or I'll drown you out with the music
of war.

DUCHESS

Are you my son?

RICHARD

Yes, I thank God, my father, and yourself.

DUCHESS

Then patiently listen to my impatience.

RICHARD

Madam, I'm a bit like you in that I can't tolerate a tone of
disapproval.

DUCHESS

Oh, let me speak!

RICHARD

Go ahead, but I won't listen.

DUCHESS

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,

165 God knows, in torment and in agony.

RICHARD

And came I not at last to comfort you?

DUCHESS

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;

170 Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;

Thy school days frightful, desp'rate, wild, and 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.

175 What comfortable hour canst thou name,

That ever graced me in thy company?

RICHARD

Faith, none but Humfrey Hower, that called your Grace

To breakfast once, forth of my company.

DUCHESS

I'll be gentle and mild.

RICHARD

And brief, good mother—I'm in a hurry.

DUCHESS

Are you that impatient? God knows I waited for you in anguish, pain, and agony when I gave birth to you.

RICHARD

And didn't I finally arrive to comfort you?

DUCHESS

No, by God, you know perfectly well you arrived on earth to make it my hell. Your birth was incredibly painful; you were a fussy and difficult baby; as a schoolboy, you were frightening, wild, furious, and caused me despair; as a young man, you were daring, bold, and enterprising, and in your maturity, you have been haughty, bloody, and treacherous—both more mild and more harmful than before. So, what hour of comfort have I ever had in your company? Name one.

RICHARD

I guess none except [Humphrey](#) Hour, who once invited you to have breakfast without me. If I be such a disgrace in your eyes,

If I be so disgracious in your eye,

180 Let me march on and not offend you, madam.—
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

So.

DUCHESS

185 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.
Therefore take with thee my most grievous curse,
190 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
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies

let me march on and not offend you. Strike up the band!

DUCHESS

Please, listen to me.

RICHARD

You're too bitter.

DUCHESS

Just listen this once. I'll never speak to you again.

RICHARD

So be it.

DUCHESS

Either you will die as you should, before you've had a chance
to win this battle, or I will die from grief and age and never look
upon your face again. So, take with you my heaviest curse,
which I hope wears you out in battle even more than your
heavy suit of armor will. I pray that the little souls of Edward's
children will whisper to your enemies and promise them
success and victory. You are violent, and your end will be
violent. Your life was shameful, and let your death be, too.

195 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

Though far more cause, yet much less spirit to curse
Abides in me. I say amen to her.

RICHARD

200 Stay, madam. I must talk a word with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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

205 You have a daughter called Elizabeth,
Virtuous and fair, royal and gracious.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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,
210 Throw over her the veil of infamy.

She exits.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Though I have far more reason, I don't have as much energy to
curse you. But I say amen to everything she said.

RICHARD

Wait, madam. I need to speak a word with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I have no more royal sons for you to murder. As for my
daughters, Richard, they will become praying nuns, not
weeping queens. So don't aim at them.

RICHARD

You have a daughter named Elizabeth, who is virtuous and
beautiful, aristocratic and full of grace.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And does she have to die for this? Oh, let her live, and I'll ruin
her manners and her beauty. So that she may live, I'll say I
cheated on Edward and that she is not really his child.

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

To save her life, I'll say she is not so.

RICHARD

215 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

All unavoided is the doom of destiny.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

220 True, when avoided grace makes destiny.
My babes were destined to a fairer death
If grace had blessed thee with a fairer life.

RICHARD

Don't wrong her birth. She has royal blood.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To save her life, I'll say she doesn't.

RICHARD

Her life is only safe if she's really of royal blood.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Yes, as safe as her brothers' lives were.

RICHARD

They were born under unlucky stars.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The stars weren't the problem. Bad friends were.

RICHARD

You can't escape a bad destiny.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

True, when a king who defies God is choosing that destiny. My children would have enjoyed a better death if God had blessed you with a purer life.

RICHARD

You speak as if that I had slain my cousins.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Cousins, indeed, and by their uncle cozened

225 Of comfort, kingdom, kindred, freedom, life.

Whose hand soever launched their tender hearts,

Thy head, all indirectly, gave direction.

No doubt the murd'rous knife was dull and blunt

Till it was whetted on thy stone-hard heart,

230 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

Till that my nails were anchored in thine eyes,

And I, in such a desp'rate bay of death,

235 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

As I intend more good to you and yours

240 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

You speak as if / had killed my nephews.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Nephews, indeed, cheated by their uncle of comfort, kingdom,

relatives, freedom, and life. Whichever hand literally stabbed

their tender hearts, you're the one who gave the order. No

doubt the murderous knife was blunt till it was sharpened on

your stony heart—you reveled in my lambs' bloody guts. But

constant expression of wild grief will only make it tame, so I'm

not going to say any more about my boys until I've gouged

your eyes out with my bare hands. Like a sailboat that has lost

its sails, I will throw myself on your rocky bosom—and get torn

to pieces.

RICHARD

Madam, if I do as well as I think I'm going to do in these

dangerous, violent wars, you and your relatives will have more

good at my hands than you've ever had bad!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What good does heaven have in store that can do me any

good now?

RICHARD

The advancement of your children, gentle lady.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Up to some scaffold, there to lose their heads.

RICHARD

245 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,
Canst thou demise to any child of mine?

RICHARD

250 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
Which thou supposest I have done to thee.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

255 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.

RICHARD

The advancement of your children, noble lady.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Advancement to some scaffold, to lose their heads.

RICHARD

No, advancement to the dignity and height of honor, to a high,
imperial kind of glory.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Flatter me in my mourning: tell me what dignity or honor you
could possible bring to any child of mine?

RICHARD

The dignity of everything I own. In fact, I will give a child of
yours everything plus myself, provided you forget the wrongs
you imagine I have done to you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Well, explain—but do it fast so that your puny store of kindness
isn't used up by talking about it.

RICHARD

Then know that from my soul I love your daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My daughter's mother thinks it with her soul.

RICHARD

What do you think?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

260 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

Be not so hasty to confound my meaning.
I mean that with my soul I love thy daughter
265 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?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What, thou?

RICHARD

Even so. How think you of it?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I believe it.

RICHARD

What do you believe?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That you love my daughter to spite your soul. That's the way you loved my brothers. And that's the way I thank you for it.

RICHARD

Don't be so quick to twist my meaning. I mean that I love your daughter *with* all my soul. I intend to make her queen of England.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Tell me, who will be the king?

RICHARD

The one who makes her queen, of course. Who else should it be?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What, you?

RICHARD

Yes, exactly. Me. What do you think, madam?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

270 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

Madam, with all my heart.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Send to her, by the man that slew her brothers,
275 A pair of bleeding hearts; thereon engrave
"Edward" and "York." Then haply she will weep.
Therefore present to her—as sometime Margaret
Did to thy father, steeped in Rutland's blood—
A handkerchief, which say to her did drain
280 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,
Send her a letter of thy noble deeds;
Tell her thou mad'st away her uncle Clarence,
285 Her uncle Rivers, ay, and for her sake
Mad'st quick conveyance with her good aunt Anne.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

How would you woo her?

RICHARD

That's what I want to find out from you, who knows her best.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And *will* you learn from me?

RICHARD

Madam, with all my heart.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Okay, then. Do this: send her a pair of bleeding hearts. Make clear they come from the man who killed her brothers. Write "Edward" and "York" on them. That will get her to weep. Then present her with a handkerchief, like the one Margaret gave your father, which was steeped in his son Rutland's blood. Tell her this handkerchief sopped up the blood of her sweet brother's body and urge her to dry her weeping eyes with it. If this encouragement doesn't move her to love you, send her a description of your other noble deeds. Tell her how you secretly dispensed with her uncle Clarence, her uncle Rivers, and, for her sake, her good aunt Anne.

RICHARD

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
290 And not be Richard, that hath done all this.

RICHARD

Say that I did all this for love of her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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.
295 Men shall deal unadvisedly sometimes,
Which after-hours give leisure to repent.
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,
300 To quicken your increase I will beget
Mine issue of your blood upon your daughter.
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,

RICHARD

Come, come, you're making fun of me. This is not the way to
win your daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

There isn't any other way, unless you took on another form and
became someone else.

RICHARD

But suppose I did all the things you named out of love for her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Then she has no choice but to hate you, as you purchased her
love with murder.

RICHARD

Whatever has already been done can't be undone now. Men
act imprudently sometimes, then realize their mistakes when
they have time to think about them. If I took the kingdom from
your sons, I'll give it to your daughter to make up for it. If I have
killed your children, I will have children with your daughter. A
grandmother is loved hardly less than a mother is. Your
grandchildren will be just one step removed from your own
children—they share your character, your blood, and require
the same effort minus that one night of labor, like that which
you suffered through for your own daughter. Your children
caused you trouble in your youth, but mine will bring you

305 Even of your metal, of your very blood,
Of all one pain, save for a night of groans
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.
310 The loss you have is but a son being king,
And by that loss your daughter is made queen.
I cannot make you what amends I would;
Therefore accept such kindness as I can.
Dorset your son, that with a fearful soul
315 Leads discontented steps in foreign soil,
This fair alliance quickly shall call home
To high promotions and great dignity.
The king that calls your beauteous daughter wife
Familiarly shall call thy Dorset brother.
320 Again shall you be mother to a king,
And all the ruins of distressful times
Repaired with double riches of content.
What, we have many goodly days to see!
The liquid drops of tears that you have shed
325 Shall come again, transformed to orient pearl,
Advantaging their love with interest
Of ten times double gain of happiness.
Go then, my mother; to thy daughter go.

comfort in your old age. The only loss you've had is that your son was not king. Because of that loss, your daughter will be queen. I can't make up for everything that I'd like to, so accept such kindness as I can offer. Your son Dorset, who fled in fear to join an army in France against me, could come home to high promotions and great dignity. The king who calls your beautiful daughter "wife" will call Dorset "brother." And you will be the mother to a king again, with all the miseries of unhappy times not just repaired, but also improved. Indeed, we have many good days to look forward to! The tears you have shed will be transformed into pearls. Your happiness will be like a loan that has grown through interest to ten times its original size. Go, then, mother, to your daughter.

Make bold her bashful years with your experience;

Give her the benefit of your experience, and prepare her to

330 Prepare her ears to hear a wooer's tale;
Put in her tender heart th' aspiring flame
Of golden sovereignty; acquaint the Princess
With the sweet silent hours of marriage joys;
And when this arm of mine hath chastisèd
335 The petty rebel, dull-brained Buckingham,
Bound with triumphant garlands will I come
And lead thy daughter to a conqueror's bed,
To whom I will retail my conquest won,
And she shall be sole victoress, Caesar's Caesar.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

340 What were I best to say? Her father's brother
Would be her lord? Or shall I say her uncle?
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
345 Can make seem pleasing to her tender years?

RICHARD

Infer fair England's peace by this alliance.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Which she shall purchase with still-lasting war.

RICHARD

Tell her the king, that may command, entreats—

hear me court her. Make her aspire to be queen. Tell the princess about the sweet, silent hours of joy there are in marriage. And when my army has chastised the petty rebel, that stupid Buckingham, I will return wreathed in victory crowns and lead your daughter to a conqueror's bed. She will be the only victor over my triumphs. She will be the ruler of a Caesar.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What should I say to her? That her father's brother wants to be her husband? Or should I say it's her uncle? Or should I describe you as the one who killed her brothers and her uncles? How can I describe you that will make you appeal to the young woman and will also agree with God, the law, my honor, and her feelings?

RICHARD

Claim fair England's peace depends on this alliance.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

She will purchase that peace with an everlasting war.

RICHARD

Tell her that the king, who has the power to command people, asks her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That, at her hands, which the king's King forbids.

RICHARD

350 Say she shall be a high and mighty queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To vail the title, as her mother doth.

RICHARD

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

355 But how long fairly shall her sweet life last?

RICHARD

As long as heaven and nature lengthens it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

As long as hell and Richard likes of it.

RICHARD

Say I, her sovereign, am her subject low.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

He asks her to do what God [forbids](#).

RICHARD

Say she will be a high and mighty queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Only to watch that title become worthless, as her mother has.

RICHARD

Say I will love her everlastingly.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But how long will "ever" last?

RICHARD

Until her beautiful life's end.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But how long will her beautiful life last?

RICHARD

As long as heaven and nature extend it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

As long as hell and Richard want it.

RICHARD

Tell her that I, her king, am her lowly subject.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

But she, your subject, loathes such sovereignty.

RICHARD

360 Be eloquent in my behalf to her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

An honest tale speeds best being plainly told.

RICHARD

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

365 O no, my reasons are too deep and dead—
Too deep and dead, poor infants, in their graves.

RICHARD

Harp not on that string, madam; that is past.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Harp on it still shall I till heart-strings break.

RICHARD**QUEEN ELIZABETH**

But she, your subject, hates such a king.

RICHARD

Be eloquent on my behalf.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

An honest tale succeeds best when it is told simply.

RICHARD

Then tell her my loving story in simple terms.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You can't tell a story simply when it's a lie.

RICHARD

Your answers are too shallow and too hasty.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh no, my reasons are deep and as permanent as death.
They're buried as deep as my poor infants in their grave.

RICHARD

Don't harp on that point, madam—it's past.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I will harp on it till my heartstrings break.

RICHARD

Now by my George, my Garter, and my crown—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

370 Profaned, dishonored, and the third usurped.

RICHARD

I swear—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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.
375 If something thou wouldest swear to be believed,
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.

Now, by St. George, my knighthood, and my crown—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The first you profaned, the second you dishonored, and the third you stole.

RICHARD

I swear—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

By nothing, because this is no oath. St. George loses his holiness once *you* have sworn by him; you've ruined the emblem of the knighthood, and the crown lost its kingly glory once you stole it. If you want me to believe something you'll swear to, then swear by something you haven't wronged.

RICHARD

Then, by myself—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You've misused yourself.

RICHARD

Now, by the world—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

It's full of your ugly wrongdoings.

RICHARD

My father's death—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Thy life hath it dishonored.

RICHARD

380 Why then, by God.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God's wrong is most of all.

If thou didst fear to break an oath by Him,

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,

385 Th' imperial metal circling now thy head

Had graced the tender temples of my child,

And both the princes had been breathing here,

Which now, two tender bedfellows for dust,

Thy broken faith hath made the prey for worms.

390 What canst thou swear by now?

RICHARD

The time to come.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That thou hast wrongèd in the time o'erpast;

For I myself have many tears to wash

RICHARD

By my father's death—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Your life has dishonored his death.

RICHARD

Why then, by God—

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You wrong God most of all. If you had been afraid to break an oath with him, you wouldn't have ruined the united front the king, my husband, created before he died, and you wouldn't have killed my brothers. If you had been afraid to break an oath with him, the crown you are currently wearing would have graced the head of my child, and both princes would still be alive, not preyed on by worms. What can you swear by now?

RICHARD

By the future.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

You've already wronged that by what you did in the past. I myself have many tears to cry in the time to come, because of

Hereafter time, for time past wronged by thee.
The children live whose fathers thou hast slaughtered,
395 Ungoverned youth, to wail it in their age;
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

400 As I intend to prosper and repent,
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,
405 Be opposite all planets of good luck
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.
410 Without her follows to myself and thee,
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.
415 Therefore, dear mother—I must call you so—
Be the attorney of my love to her:

what you've done. There are children living whose fathers you have slaughtered. When they are grown, they will wail about a childhood in which no one watched out for them. There are parents living whose children you have butchered; they are now old withered plants who will moan over their losses as they grow old. Don't swear by the future, because you've ruined it before it has even arrived.

RICHARD

May I only do well in these dangerous battles if my intention to repent and prosper is sincere! Let me destroy myself, let heaven and destiny deprive me of happy hours, let day remain dark and night sleepless, and let me have nothing but terrible luck if I do not love with a pure heart, clean devotion, and holy thoughts your beautiful royal daughter. My happiness and yours lie in her. If I do not win her, death, desolation, and decay will descend on this land and on me, you, herself, and many a Christian soul. Ruin cannot be avoided unless I marry her. It *will not* be avoided unless I marry her. Therefore, good mother—I must call you that—advocate for me. Plead with your daughter about what I will be, not what I have been. Don't talk about my just desserts but about what I *will* deserve. Tell her how necessary this marriage is at this time, and don't be small-minded about such important plans.

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,

420 And be not peevish found in great designs.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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

425 Yet thou didst kill my children.

RICHARD

But in your daughter's womb I bury them,

Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed

Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I be tempted by the devil?

RICHARD

Yes, if the devil tempts you to do good.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I forget the wrongs you've done to me so that I can be
the mother of a king again?

RICHARD

Yes, if your memories do you no good.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Yet you killed my children.

RICHARD

But in your daughter's womb I will bury them. In that rich nest
they shall grow again, to console you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Should I go convince my daughter to marry you?

RICHARD

430 And be a happy mother by the deed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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

435 How now, what news?

RATCLIFFE

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.
440 'Tis thought that Richmond is their admiral;
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—

RICHARD

And be a happy mother by doing so.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I'm going. Write to me very soon and I'll let you know what she thinks.

RICHARD

Give her a kiss from me, her true love. And so, goodbye.

QUEEN ELIZABETH exits.

Weak-willed fool! Shallow, fickle woman!

RATCLIFFE enters, with **CATESBY** following.

Hello! What's the news?

RATCLIFFE

My noble king, a powerful fleet of ships sails on the western coast. Many former friends of ours have gathered to meet the fleet and aren't willing to beat it back. Word is that Richmond is the navy's admiral. The ships are drifting off the coast, sails unfurled, only waiting for Buckingham to help them come ashore.

RICHARD

Ratcliffe, thyself, or Catesby. Where is he?

CATESBY

445 Here, my good lord.

RICHARD

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

450 — (to CATESBY) Dull, unmindful villain,
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
455 The greatest strength and power that he can make
And meet me suddenly at Salisbury.

CATESBY

I go.

Someone who can ride fast, go to the duke of [Norfolk](#). You go,
Ratcliffe, or Catesby. Where is Catesby?

CATESBY

Here, my good lord.

RICHARD

Catesby, fly to the duke.

CATESBY

I will my lord, as fast as I can.

RICHARD

Ratcliffe, come here. Ride to Salisbury. When you get there—*(to CATESBY)* Stupid, distracted rascal, why are you still standing there? Why haven't you left for the duke's?

CATESBY

First, mighty king, tell me what you want me to tell him.

RICHARD

Oh, right, good Catesby. Tell him to gather together the greatest army he can muster in a hurry and meet me right away at Salisbury.

CATESBY

I'm off.

Exit

RATCLIFFE

What, may it please you, shall I do at Salisbury?

RICHARD

Why, what wouldst thou do there before I go?

RATCLIFFE

460 Your Highness told me I should post before.

RICHARD

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

Hoyday, a riddle! Neither good nor bad.

465 What need'st thou run so many mile about
When thou mayst tell thy tale the nearest way?
Once more, what news?

STANLEY

He exits.

RATCLIFFE

What would you like me to do at Salisbury?

RICHARD

Why, what is there to do before I get there?

RATCLIFFE

Your Highness just told me that I should ride there before you.

RICHARD

I changed my mind.

STANLEY enters.

Stanley, what news do you have?

STANLEY

Nothing that you want to hear, my lord, but nothing so bad that I can't mention it.

RICHARD

Well, how nice, a riddle! Neither good nor bad. Why do you go around in circles when you could get to the point? Once again, what's the news?

STANLEY

Richmond is on the seas.

RICHARD

There let him sink, and be the seas on him!
White-livered runagate, what doth he there?

STANLEY

470 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

Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed?
475 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

Unless for that, my liege, I cannot guess.

RICHARD

480 Unless for that he comes to be your liege,
You cannot guess wherefore the Welshman comes.

Richmond is sailing on the sea.

RICHARD

Let him sink there so the sea will cover him! Lily-livered
coward, what's he doing there?

STANLEY

I don't know, mighty king. I can only guess.

RICHARD

Well, what do you guess?

STANLEY

That, stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Morton, he's
coming to England to claim the crown.

RICHARD

Is the throne empty? Is the army without a leader? Is the king
dead, the empire dispossessed? What heir of the York family is
there alive other than myself? And who is England's king but
an heir of the great York? Therefore, tell me, what is he doing
at sea?

STANLEY

Unless it's what I said, your Majesty, I have no idea.

RICHARD

Unless he's coming to be your leader you can't guess why the
[Welshman's](#) coming? You plan to revolt and join him, I'm afraid.

Thou wilt revolt and fly to him, I fear.

STANLEY

No, my good lord. Therefore mistrust me not.

RICHARD

Where is thy power, then, to beat him back?

485 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

Cold friends to me. What do they in the north

490 When they should serve their sovereign in the west?

STANLEY

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

495 Ay, thou wouldst be gone to join with Richmond,

But I'll not trust thee.

STANLEY

STANLEY

No, mighty king, do not distrust me.

RICHARD

Where is your army, then, to beat him back? Where are your tenants and your followers? Aren't they at this very moment on the western shore helping the rebels land 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 in the west serving their king?

STANLEY

They haven't been commanded to go to the west, mighty king. If your Majesty would like, I'll muster up my friends and meet you wherever and whenever you like.

RICHARD

Yes, you want to go join Richmond. But I'm not going to trust you.

STANLEY

Most mighty sovereign,
You have no cause to hold my friendship doubtful.
I never was nor never will be false.

RICHARD

Go then and muster men, but leave behind
500 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

My gracious sovereign, now in Devonshire,
As I by friends am well advertisèd,
505 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

In Kent, my liege, the Guilfords are in arms,
And every hour more competitors

Most mighty sovereign, you have no reason to doubt my
friendship. I was never disloyal, and I never will be.

RICHARD

Then go gather your men, but leave behind your son, George
Stanley. Make sure your faith is firm, or he has little chance of
keeping his head.

STANLEY

Treat him as my loyalty toward you calls for.

He exits.

A MESSENGER enters.

MESSENGER

My noble king, my friends have informed me that Sir Edward
Courtney and his brother, the haughty Bishop of Exeter, are
now in [Devonshire](#), where they have assembled an army.

A SECOND MESSENGER enters.

SECOND MESSENGER

My king, the Guildfords in [Kent](#) have armed themselves, and
every hour new associates flock to their aid, and their army

510 Flock to the rebels, and their power grows strong.

Enter THIRD MESSENGER

THIRD MESSENGER

My lord, the army of great Buckingham—

RICHARD

Out on you, owls! Nothing but songs of death.

He striketh him

There, take thou that till thou bring better news.

THIRD MESSENGER

515 The news I have to tell your Majesty
Is that by sudden floods and fall of waters
Buckingham's army is dispersed and scattered,
And he himself wandered away alone,
No man knows whither.

RICHARD

I cry thee mercy.

520 There is my purse to cure that blow of thine.

He gives money

Hath any well-advisèd friend proclaimed
Reward to him that brings the traitor in?

THIRD MESSENGER

Such proclamation hath been made, my lord.

increases.

A THIRD MESSENGER enters.

THIRD MESSENGER

My lord, the duke of Buckingham's army—

RICHARD

Enough, you *owls*! Do you have nothing but songs of death?

(he strikes the THIRD MESSENGER) Take that until you bring me better news.

THIRD MESSENGER

The news I have to tell your majesty is that Buckingham's army has dispersed from sudden floods and heavy rainfall.
Buckingham himself has wandered away alone to who knows where.

RICHARD

I beg your pardon. Here's some money to make up for that blow I gave you. *(he gives money)* Has any intelligent friend of ours offered a reward to whoever catches the traitor?

THIRD MESSENGER

Yes, your Highness.

Enter FOURTH MESSENGER

FOURTH MESSENGER

525 Sir Thomas Lovell and Lord Marquess Dorset,
'Tis said, my liege, in Yorkshire are in arms.
But this good comfort bring I to your Highness:
The Breton navy is dispersed by tempest.
Richmond, in Dorsetshire, sent out a boat
530 Unto the shore to ask those on the banks
If they were his assistants, yea or no—
Who answered him they came from Buckingham
Upon his party. He, mistrusting them,
Hoisted sail and made his course for Brittany.

RICHARD

535 March on, march on, since we are up in arms,
If not to fight with foreign enemies,
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
540 Is with a mighty power landed at Milford,
Is colder tidings, yet they must be told.

RICHARD

A FOURTH MESSENGER enters.

FOURTH MESSENGER

It's been reported that Sir Thomas Lovell and Lord Marquess Dorset have assembled an army in [Yorkshire](#), my lord. But I bring your Grace this comfort: a storm has dispersed the navy from Brittany. And Richmond, who is in [Dorsetshire](#), sent a boat to shore to ask the men on the banks if they were on his side, yes or no. They said they were with Buckingham. Richmond didn't trust them. He hoisted sail again and sailed back to Brittany.

RICHARD

Let's keep marching since we're prepared to fight. Even if we don't fight foreign enemies, we'll beat down these rebels at home.

CATESBY returns.

CATESBY

Your Majesty, the duke of Buckingham has been captured—that's the best news. The fact that the earl of Richmond has landed in [Milford](#) with a mighty army is less good news, but it must be told.

RICHARD

Away towards Salisbury! While we reason here,
A royal battle might be won and lost.
Someone take order Buckingham be brought
545 To Salisbury. The rest march on with me.

Flourish. Exeunt

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 three gone. Command 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?

Away toward Salisbury! While we're talking here, a royal battle
could be won and lost. Someone deliver the order that
Buckingham be brought to Salisbury. Everyone else, march on
with me.

A trumpet plays.

They all exit.

Act 4 Scene 5

STANLEY and Sir CHRISTOPHER enter.

STANLEY

Sir Christopher, relay this message to Richmond: My son
George Stanley is penned up in the bloody boar's sty. If I revolt,
off goes young George's head. My fear of that prevents me
from helping Richmond at this time. But, tell me, where is the
noble Richmond now?

CHRISTOPHER

At Pembroke, or at Harfordwest in Wales.

STANLEY

Which noblemen have joined him?

CHRISTOPHER

Sir Walter Herbert, a renownèd soldier;
Sir Gilbert Talbot, Sir William Stanley,
Oxford, redoubted Pembroke, Sir James Blunt,
15 And Rice 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

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**CHRISTOPHER**

Sir Walter Herbert, a renowned soldier; Sir Gilbert Talbot; Sir William Stanley; Oxford; the highly feared Pembroke; Sir James Blunt; Rice ap Thomas, with a valiant crew; and many other famous and powerful noblemen. They plan to head straight to London, assuming they don't encounter any resistance on the way.

STANLEY

(giving him a paper) Return to your lord. Give him my best regards. Tell him the queen has given her heartfelt consent to his marriage to her daughter, Elizabeth. And these letters will let him know what my thinking is. Goodbye, and take care.

They exit.

Act 5 Scene 1

BUCKINGHAM enters with SHERIFF and guards leading him to his execution.

BUCKINGHAM

Won't King Richard let me speak with him?

SHERIFF

No, my good lord. So be calm.

BUCKINGHAM

Hastings and Edward's children, Grey and Rivers,
Holy King Henry and thy fair son Edward,
5 Vaughan, and all that have miscarrièd
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 feignèd 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.

Hastings and Edward's children, Rivers and Grey, holy King Henry and your fine son Edward, Vaughan, and all who have died from underhanded, corrupt, fiendish injustice, if your angry souls are witnessing this moment through the clouds, enjoy the revenge—laugh at my ruin! This is *All-Souls'* day, fellows, isn't it?

SHERIFF

It is, my lord.

BUCKINGHAM

Why, then, it's my body's doomsday. Today I'm going to get what I said I wished would happen to me if I was ever false to King Edward's children or his wife's allies. This is the day I'm going to get what I wished for when I wished that the person I most trusted would betray me. This, this All-Souls' day, is my just desserts. I tried to play games with God, and he turned my fake prayer on my head, giving me for real what I'd asked for as a joke.

This is how God forces wicked men to turn their swords against themselves. Margaret's curse has come true. "When Richard

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.
Wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame.

Exeunt

*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,
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,

has split your heart in two with grief," she said, "you'll know that Margaret was a prophetess." Come, sirs, bring me to this block of shame. I have done wrong, so I will suffer wrong. I have been blamed because I deserved to be.

They all exit.

Act 5 Scene 2

*RICHMOND, OXFORD, BLUNT, HERBERT, and others enter with
drummers and flag bearers.*

RICHMOND

Fellow soldiers and my loyal friends suffering under that tyrant Richard, we have marched all the way to the center of England without encountering any opposition. And now we receive encouraging news from my stepfather Stanley: Richard—that violent, greedy boar who roots through your summer fields and ripening vines, guzzles your warm blood, and makes his trough in your disemboweled bellies—is now near the town of Leicester, only one day's march from us here in [Tamworth](#). In God's name, let's continue on in high spirits, my courageous friends. Our aim is to achieve everlasting peace from this one violent war.

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

*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?

OXFORD

Every man's conscience is a thousand swords against this
murderer.

HERBERT

I suspect his friends will join us.

BLUNT

He has no friends except those who are too afraid to defy him.
In his greatest need, even they will desert him.

RICHMOND

All to our advantage. So, in God's name, let's march. Hope with
good cause is swift; it flies as fast as a swallow. It turns kings
into gods and men of lower rank into kings.

They all exit.

Act 5 Scene 3

*RICHARD, dressed in his armor, enters with NORFOLK, SURREY,
and others.*

RICHARD

Let's pitch our tents right here in Bosworth Field. My Lord of
Surrey, why do you look 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.

SURREY

My heart is ten times lighter than my looks.

RICHARD

My Lord of Norfolk—

NORFOLK

Here, most gracious king.

RICHARD

Norfolk, we're going to have a few blows, right?

NORFOLK

We've got to give them and take them, my lord.

RICHARD

Put my tent up! I'll lie here tonight. But where will I lie tomorrow? Well, it doesn't matter. Does anyone know the number of the enemy's troops?

NORFOLK

Six or seven thousand, at most.

RICHARD

Why, our troops amount to three times that. Besides, the king's name is a tower of strength; the opposition doesn't have that advantage. Put up my tent! Come, noble gentlemen, let us look at our battle plan and get some experienced officers to

Call for some men of sound direction.
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. Some of 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?

help us figure out the best strategy. Let's be disciplined and not delay, because tomorrow is a busy day.

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.

RICHMOND

The sunset was golden and left a bright track in the sky, which indicates that tomorrow will be a good day. Sir William Brandon, you will carry my flag. Bring some ink and paper to my tent, and I'll draw a model of our battle, appoint each leader to his particular command, and carefully divide up our small army. My Lord of Oxford, you, Sir William Brandon, and you, Sir Walter Herbert, are going to stay with me. The earl of Pembroke will stick with his regiment. Good Captain Blunt, tell the earl goodnight from me, and tell him that by two in the morning I would like him to visit my tent. One more thing before you go, Blunt—where is Lord Stanley lodging, 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*

BLUNT

Unless I've mistaken his battle flags, which I'm sure I haven't,
his regiment lies at least half a mile south of the king's mighty
army.

RICHMOND

If it's possible to do this without putting yourself in danger,
dear Captain Blunt, say goodnight to him from me and give
him this important note.

He hands him a paper

BLUNT

Upon my life, my lord, I'll do it. Have a restful night!

RICHMOND

Good night, dear Captain Blunt.

Blunt exits.

Come, gentlemen, let's discuss tomorrow's action in my tent.
The night air is too raw and cold for us to stay outdoors.

**RICHARD, NORFOLK, RATCLIFFE, CATESBY, and others enter in
RICHARD's tent.**

RICHARD

What is "t o'clock?

CATESBY

50 It's supertime, 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.

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

What time is it?

CATESBY

It's dinnertime, my lord. It's nine o'clock.

RICHARD

I'm not going to eat dinner tonight. Give me some ink and paper. Is the visor of my helmet working better now? And has my armor been put in my tent?

CATESBY

Yes, my lord. Everything's ready.

RICHARD

My good man Norfolk, hurry to your post. Be careful whom you choose as guards—make sure they're trustworthy.

NORFOLK

I'm off, my lord.

RICHARD

Get up early tomorrow—at the sound of the lark—noble Norfolk.

NORFOLK

I will, my lord.

He exits.

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

RICHARD

Catesby.

CATESBY

Yes, my lord?

RICHARD

Send a junior officer to Stanley's regiment to tell Stanley to
bring his men here before sunrise—if he wants to see his son
George alive.

CATESBY exits.

(*to soldiers*) Get me some wine. Get a soldier to stand watch
outside my tent. Saddle my white horse Surrey for battle
tomorrow. Make sure the shafts of my lances are solid, but not
too heavy. Ratcliffe!

RATCLIFFE

Yes, my lord?

RICHARD

Did you see the gloomy Lord Northumberland?

RATCLIFFE

Thomas, the earl of Surrey, and he were moving from troop to
troop around twilight cheering up the soldiers.

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!

RICHMOND

All comfort that the dark night can afford
85 Be to thy person, noble father-in-law.
Tell me, how fares our loving mother?

RICHARD

Good, I'm satisfied. Give me some wine—I don't feel as energetic as I used to. Set it down. Is my ink and paper ready?

RATCLIFFE

It is, my lord.

RICHARD

Make sure my guard is on duty and leave me alone. Ratcliffe, around midnight come to my tent and help me put on my armor. Now leave me alone, as I said.

RATCLIFFE and the other attendants exit. RICHARD sleeps.

STANLEY enters and goes to RICHMOND's tent, where lords and others are waiting on him.

STANLEY

Let fortune and victory be yours!

RICHMOND

I wish you all the comfort that such a dark night as this can offer, noble father-in-law. Tell me, how is my 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-staring war.
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.
God give us leisure for these rites of love!
105 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,

STANLEY

Your mother sends her blessings. She prays continually on your behalf. Enough about that—morning will be here soon. To be brief—as the occasion requires—prepare to fight early in the morning, when your future will be decided. I can't do everything I want to, but I'll help you as well as I can. But I can't be too obvious about being on your side without risking the life of your stepbrother, young George. If I'm seen helping you, George will be killed right in front of my eyes. Farewell. The lack of time and the risk I'm under will have to keep us from bonding and catching up on each other's news the way we usually would after not seeing each other for so long. I hope we have the time some day! Again, goodbye. Be brave and do well!

RICHMOND

Good lords, escort him to his regiment. I'm going to try to take a nap despite my racing thoughts so that exhaustion won't get

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.

the better of me tomorrow, when I'll need to ride as if my horse had wings.

Again, good night, kind lords and gentlemen.

Everyone exits except RICHMOND.

Oh God, whose side I think I'm fighting on, look kindly on my forces. Fuel them with dangerous fury, so they can crush the enemy. Make us your agents of revenge, so we can praise you when we're victorious! Before I fall asleep, I entrust my soul to you. Defend me, God, both when I'm asleep and when I'm awake.

He sleeps.

The GHOST OF PRINCE EDWARD, King Henry VI's son, enters.

GHOST OF PRINCE EDWARD

(to RICHARD) I will weigh heavily on your soul tomorrow.

Remember how you stabbed me at Tewksbury, when I was just a young man. Despair, and die! (to RICHMOND) Be cheerful, Richmond—butchered princes fight for you. I, King Henry's son, will provide you with comfort.

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.

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

The GHOST OF KING HENRY VI enters.

GHOST OF KING HENRY VI

(to RICHARD) When I was still alive, you punctured my body,
the body of God's blessed king, full of holes. Remember the
Tower and me there. Despair, and die! Harry the Sixth
commands you to despair and die! (to RICHMOND) Because
you are virtuous and holy, you must be the conqueror! Harry,
who prophesied that you would be king, comforts you in your
sleep: live and prosper!

He exits.

The GHOST OF CLARENCE enters.

GHOST OF CLARENCE

(to RICHARD) I hope I weigh heavily on your soul tomorrow! It's
me, drowned to death in a nauseating barrel of wine. It's me,
poor Clarence, whom you betrayed to death! Tomorrow in
battle, think of me and drop your useless sword. Despair, and
die! (to RICHMOND) Offspring of the House of Lancaster, the
wronged heirs of York pray for you. Good angels protect your
fight! Live and prosper!

145 Good angels guard thy battle. Live and flourish.

Exit

Enter the GHOSTS OF RIVERS, GRAY, 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*)

He exits.

The GHOSTS of RIVERS, GRAY, and VAUGHAN enter.

GHOST OF RIVERS

(*to RICHARD*) I will weigh heavily on your soul tomorrow—I,
Rivers, who died at Pomfret. Despair, and die!

GHOST OF GREY

(*to RICHARD*) Think about Grey, and despair!

GHOST OF VAUGHAN

(*to RICHARD*) Think about Vaughan, and drop your lance from
fear and guilt. Despair, and die!

ALL

(*to RICHMOND*) Awaken, and have faith that the wrongs
Richard carries in his heart will defeat him! Awaken, and win
the day!

They exit.

The GHOSTS OF the two young PRINCES enter.

GHOSTS OF PRINCES

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.

Enter the GHOST OF ANNE

GHOST OF ANNE

170 (to RICHARD)
Richard, thy wife, that wretched Anne thy wife,

(to RICHARD) Dream about your nephews, smothered in the Tower. Let us rest in your heart as heavily as lead, Richard, and drag you down to ruin, shame, and death! Your nephews' souls command that you 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 whole, happy race of kings! Edward's unlucky sons want you to flourish.

They exit.

The GHOST OF HASTINGS enters.

GHOST OF HASTINGS

(to RICHARD) You violent, guilty man, wake up full of guilt and end your days in a bloody battle! Think about Lord Hastings. Despair, and die! (to RICHMOND) Quiet untroubled soul, wake up! Arm yourself, fight, and win for beautiful England's sake!

He exits.

The GHOST OF ANNE enters.

GHOST OF ANNE

(to RICHARD) Richard, your wife, your wretched wife, Anne, who never enjoyed a quiet hour of sleep with you, now fills

That never slept a quiet hour with thee,
Now fills thy sleep with perturbations.
Tomorrow, in the battle, think on me,
175 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

(to RICHARD) The last was I that helped thee to the crown;
180 The last was I that felt thy tyranny.
O, in the battle think on Buckingham,
And die in terror of thy guiltiness.
Dream on, dream on, of bloody deeds and death.
Fainting, despair; despairing, yield thy breath.
185 (to RICHMOND) I died for hope ere I could lend thee aid,
But cheer thy heart, and be thou not dismayed.
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

your sleep with disturbing thoughts. Tomorrow in battle think of me and fall on your sword: despair, and die! (to RICHMOND)
You quiet soul, sleep a quiet sleep. Dream of success and happy victory. Your enemy's wife is praying for you.

She exits.

The GHOST OF BUCKINGHAM enters.

GHOST OF BUCKINGHAM

(to RICHARD) I was the first to help you to the crown and the last to feel the effects of your tyranny. Think of Buckingham when you're fighting tomorrow, and die terrified of the sins you've committed! Tonight, dream of bloody deeds and death. Tomorrow, when you lose heart, fall into despair and then death. (to RICHMOND) I died before I could help you as I was hoping to. But be cheerful and don't worry. God and good angels fight on your side, and Richard will fall at the height of his false pride.

He exits.

RICHARD starts up out of his dream.

RICHARD

Give me another horse! Bind up my wounds!

190 Have mercy, Jesu!—Soft, I did but dream.

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!

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.

195 Richard loves Richard; that is, I and I.

Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.

Then fly! What, from myself? Great reason why:

Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?

Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good

200 That I myself have done unto myself?

O, no! Alas, I rather hate myself

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.

205 My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,

And every tongue brings in a several tale,

And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree;

Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;

210 All several sins, all used in each degree,

Throng to the bar, crying all, "Guilty! guilty!"

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,

RICHARD

Give me another horse! Bandage my wounds! Have mercy,

Jesus!—Wait, I was only dreaming. Oh cowardly conscience,

how you're torturing me! The candles burn blue—that means

it's the dead of night. I'm sweating and trembling with fear. But

what am I afraid of? Myself? There's no one else here. Richard

loves Richard, that is, there's just me and myself here. Is there a

murderer here? No. Yes, I am. Then run away. What, from

myself? Yes, to avoid taking revenge on myself. Unfortunately, I

love myself. Why? Did I do anything good to myself? Oh, no.

Alas, I hate myself instead, because of the hateful deeds I've

committed. I am a villain. But I'm lying; I'm not a villain. Fool,

speak well of yourself. Fool, do not flatter yourself.

Give me another horse! Bandage my wounds! Have mercy,

Jesus!—Wait, I was only dreaming. Oh cowardly conscience,

how you're torturing me! The candles burn blue—that means

it's the dead of night. I'm sweating and trembling with fear. But

what am I afraid of? Myself? There's no one else here. Richard

loves Richard, that is, there's just me and myself here. Is there a

murderer here? No. Yes, I am. Then run away. What, from

myself? Yes, to avoid taking revenge on myself. Unfortunately, I

And if I die no soul will pity me.
And wherefore should they, since that I myself
215 Find in myself no pity to myself?
Methought the souls of all that I had murdered
Came to my tent, and every one did threat
Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

Enter RATCLIFFE

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

220 Zounds, who is there?

RATCLIFFE

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.

RICHARD

O Ratcliffe, I have dreamed a fearful dream!
225 What think'st thou, will our friends prove all true?

RATCLIFFE

No doubt, my lord.

RICHARD

O Ratcliffe, I fear, I fear.

love myself. Why? Did I do anything good to myself? Oh, no. Alas, I hate myself instead, because of the hateful deeds I've committed. I am a villain. But I'm lying; I'm not a villain. Fool, speak well of yourself. Fool, do not flatter yourself.

RATCLIFFE enters.

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

Damn it, who's there?

RATCLIFFE

Ratcliffe, my lord, it's me. The rooster has already crowed twice. Your friends are up and buckling on their armor.

RICHARD

Oh Ratcliffe, I had a terrifying dream! What do you think, will my friends prove loyal?

RATCLIFFE

No doubt, my lord.

RICHARD

Oh Ratcliffe, I'm afraid, I'm afraid—

RATCLIFFE

Nay, good my lord, be not afraid of shadows.

RICHARD

By the apostle Paul, shadows tonight
230 Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
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
235 To see if any mean to shrink from me.

Exeunt

Enter the lords to RICHMOND, sitting in his tent

LORDS

Good morrow, Richmond.

RICHMOND

Cry mercy, lords and watchful gentlemen,
That you have ta'en a tardy sluggard here.

A LORD

How have you slept, my lord?

RICHMOND

240 The sweetest sleep and fairest-boding dreams

RATCLIFFE

No, my good lord, don't be afraid of dreams.

RICHARD

By St. Paul, ghosts have struck more terror in my soul tonight
than ten thousand of worthless Richmond's soldiers could,
dressed up in their most sword-proof armor. It's not yet
daylight. Come with me; I'll spy under the tents to see if any of
my own people plan to desert me.

They exit

RICHMOND's LORDS enter his tent and go to where he is sitting.

LORDS

Good morning, Richmond.

RICHMOND

Pardon me, lords and gentlemen who stayed awake. You've
caught me oversleeping.

A LORD

How did you sleep, my lord?

RICHMOND

That ever entered in a drowsy head
Have I since your departure had, my lords.
Methought their souls whose bodies Richard murdered
Came to my tent and cried on victory.

245 I promise you, my soul is very jocund
In the remembrance of so fair a dream.
How far into the morning is it, lords?

LORDS

Upon the stroke of four.

RICHMOND

Why, then 'tis time to arm and give direction.

250 His oration to his soldiers
More than I have said, loving countrymen,
The leisure and enforcement of the time
Forbids to dwell upon. Yet remember this:

God and our good cause fight upon our side.

255 The prayers of holy saints and wrongèd souls,
Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our faces.
Richard except, those whom we fight against
Had rather have us win than him they follow.
For what is he they follow? Truly, gentlemen,
260 A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
One raised in blood, and one in blood established;
One that made means to come by what he hath,

Since you left, I've been enjoying the sweetest sleep and most promising dreams I've ever had, my lords. I dreamed the souls of the people Richard murdered came to my tent and promised me victory. I tell you, I feel very jolly remembering such a beautiful dream. How late is it, lords?

LORDS

It's almost four.

RICHMOND

Why, then, it's time to put on my armor and instruct the troops.
(*to his soldiers*) I can't tell you much right now, loyal countrymen, because we don't have time. But know this:

We have God and a good cause on our side. The prayers of saints and those that Richard wronged support us like high-walled fortresses. Other than Richard, even those whom we fight against would rather we won. Because who is this man they follow? Truly, gentlemen, a violent tyrant and a murderer, who rose to his high position by shedding blood and kept the position the same way. He rose to the top by means of others and then slaughtered them. He's like a worthless stone, who only seems like a valuable gem because he's on the throne,

And slaughtered those that were the means to help him;
A base foul stone, made precious by the foil
265 Of England's chair, where he is falsely set;
One that hath ever been God's enemy.
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,
270 You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain.
If you do fight against your country's foes,
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.
275 If you do free your children from the sword,
Your children's children quits it in your age.
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
280 Shall be this cold corpse on the earth's cold face;
But if I thrive, the gain of my attempt
The least of you shall share his part thereof.
Sound drums and trumpets boldly and cheerfully;
God and Saint George! Richmond and victory!

where he doesn't belong. He has always been God's enemy.
And when you fight God's enemy, God will protect you. If you struggle to bring down a tyrant, you will sleep peacefully when the tyrant is killed. When you fight against your country's enemies, you will be paid for your efforts with your country's wealth. If you fight to protect your wives, your wives will welcome you home as conquerors. When you free your children from the sword, your grandchildren will repay you in your old age. So, in the name of God and all the good that will come of this [battle](#), march with your flags high and draw your swords. As for me, if I fail, the only ransom I will offer the enemy is my corpse. But if I succeed, every one of you will share in the profit. Play boldly and cheerfully, drummers and trumpeters. Here's to God and Saint George! To Richmond and victory!

They all exit.

RICHARD, RATCLIFFE, attendants, and soldiers enter.

Enter King RICHARD, RATCLIFFE, attendants and forces

Exeunt

RICHARD

285 What said Northumberland as touching Richmond?

RATCLIFFE

That he was never trainèd up in arms.

RICHARD

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

290 Tell the clock there. Give me a calendar.

He looks in an almanac

Who saw the sun today?

RATCLIFFE

Not I, my lord.

RICHARD

Then he disdains to shine, for by the book

295 He should have braved the east an hour ago

A black day will it be to somebody. Ratcliffe!

RICHARD

What did Northumberland say about Richmond?

RATCLIFFE

That he was never trained as a soldier.

RICHARD

That's true. And what did Surrey say to that?

RATCLIFFE

He smiled and said, "The better for us."

RICHARD

He's right, and that's how it is.

The clock strikes.

Read the time there. Give me an almanac. (*looking in an almanac*) Did anyone see the sun today?

RATCLIFFE

I didn't, my lord.

RICHARD

Then it refuses to shine. According to this almanac, it should have risen an hour ago. It'll be a black day for somebody today. Ratcliffe!

RATCLIFFE

My lord.

RICHARD

The sun will not be seen today.

The sky doth frown and lour upon our army.

300 I would these dewy tears were from the ground.

Not shine today? Why, what is that to me

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

305 Come, bustle, bustle. Caparison my horse.—

Call up Lord Stanley; bid him bring his power.—

I will lead forth my soldiers to the plain,

And thus my battle shall be orderèd:

My foreward shall be drawn out all in length,

310 Consisting equally of horse and foot;

Our archers shall be placèd in the midst.

John Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Earl of Surrey,

Shall have the leading of this foot and horse.

They thus directed, we will follow

RATCLIFFE

My lord?

RICHARD

The sun will not appear today. The sky frowns and scowls on our army. I wish there wasn't so much dew on the ground. So, the sun won't shine today! Well, why should that be worse for me than it is for Richmond? The same heaven that's frowning on me looks gloomily on him.

NORFOLK enters.

NORFOLK

Get ready, my lord. The enemy is making its appearance on the battlefield.

RICHARD

Hurry, hurry—prepare my horse. Tell Lord Stanley to bring his army. I will lead my soldiers to the field and the battle formation will be like this: the vanguard will extend in a line that is equal parts horsemen and foot soldiers. The archers will stay in the middle. John Duke of Norfolk and Thomas Earl of Surrey will lead the horsemen and foot soldiers. I'll follow in the center of the troop formation, which I'll defend with my best horse, and with Saint George on my side, as well! What do you think, Norfolk?

315 In the main battle, whose puissance on either side
Shall be well wingèd with our chieftest horse.
This, and Saint George to boot—What think'st thou,
Norfolk?

NORFOLK

A good direction, warlike sovereign.

He sheweth him a paper

320 This found I on my tent this morning.

RICHARD

(reads)

Jockey of Norfolk, be not so bold.
For Dickon thy master is bought and sold.
A thing devisèd by the enemy.—

325 Go, gentlemen, every man unto his charge.
Let not our babbling dreams affright our souls.
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.

330 March on. Join bravely. Let us to it pell mell
If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell.
His oration to his army
What shall I say more than I have inferred?

NORFOLK

A good plan, warrior king. I found this pinned to my tent this morning.

He shows RICHARD a piece of paper.

RICHARD

(reads) "Jackie of Norfolk, don't be too bold, for Dick your master has been betrayed." Something the enemy devised. Go, gentleman, every man to his command. Don't let babbling dreams frighten us—conscience is just a word that cowards use to intimidate the strong. The strong fight we put on will be our conscience, our swords will be our law.

March on, be brave in battle, and let's go pell-mell to heaven, if not hand in hand to hell. (to his army) What more can I say? Remember who you're dealing with—a random bunch of bums, rascals, runaways, Breton scum, and peasant hangers-

Remember whom you are to cope withal,

335 A sort of vagabonds, rascals, and runaways,

A scum of Bretons and base lackey peasants,

Whom their o'er-cloyèd country vomits forth

To desperate ventures and assured destruction.

You sleeping safe, they bring to you unrest;

340 You having lands and blessed with beauteous wives,

They would restrain the one, distain the other.

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

345 Felt so much cold as overshoes in snow?

Let's whip these stragglers o'er the seas again,

Lash hence these overweening rags of France,

These famished beggars weary of their lives,

Who, but for dreaming on this fond exploit,

350 For want of means, poor rats, had hanged themselves.

If we be conquered, let men conquer us,

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.

355 Shall these enjoy our lands, lie with our wives,

Ravish our daughters?

Drum afar off

Hark! I hear their drum.

on whom an overcrowded nation vomits out to populate every desperate, sure-to-fail enterprise. You have been sleeping soundly, and they bring unrest. You own land they want to steal. Those of you who are blessed with beautiful wives, they want to defile them. And who's leading them but an inconsequential fellow who for the longest time lived in Brittany at his mother's expense? A girly man, a man who never in his life felt more cold than seeps into one's boots in the snow? Let's send these stragglers back over the sea. Let's whip these arrogant relics of France—these starving beggars, tired of their lives, who would have hanged themselves, poor rats, if it weren't for this foolish enterprise they've been dreaming about—back to France. If we're going to be conquered, let men conquer us, and not these French bastards whom our forefathers already beat, thrashed, and pummeled on their own turf, and shamed them forever in the history books. Should these people enjoy our lands? Sleep with our wives? Rape our daughters?

Drum heard far off.

Listen! I hear their drums. Fight, gentlemen of England! Fight,

Fight, gentlemen of England.—Fight, bold yeomen.—
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head.—
360 Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood.
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves—

Enter a MESSENGER

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

365 My lord, the enemy is past the marsh.
After the battle let George Stanley die.

RICHARD
A thousand hearts are great within my bosom.
Advance our standards. Set upon our foes.
Our ancient word of courage, fair Saint George,
370 Inspire us with the spleen of fiery dragons.
Upon them! Victory sits on our helms.

Exeunt

brave landlords! Draw your bows all the way back, archers!
Spur your proud horses hard, horsemen, and ride in blood.
Startle even the sky with the sound of your lances cracking.

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 already passed the marsh. Let George
Stanley die after the battle.

RICHARD

A thousand hearts beat in my chest. Let's advance our flags,
set upon our enemies, and have our ancient saint of courage,
good Saint George, inspire us with the fury of fiery dragons!
Let's go! Victory is with us.

They all exit.

Act 5 Scene 4

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!

Blasts of military music (trumpets and drums) and flurries of soldiers fighting. NORFOLK and CATESBY enter with soldiers fighting.

CATESBY

Help, my lord of Norfolk, help, help! The king performs more wonders than seem humanly possible, challenging every enemy he sees. His horse is killed, so he's fighting on foot, risking his life to search out Richmond. Help, dear lord, or the battle will be lost!

Blasts of military music (trumpets and drums).

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!

RICHARD enters.

RICHARD

A horse, a horse, I'd give my kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY

Get off the field, my lord. I'll find you another horse.

RICHARD

Peasant, I have gambled my life on this one throw of the dice, and I'm willing to take what comes. I think there are six Richmonds on the field. I've killed five that looked like him, anyway. A horse, a horse! I'd give my kingdom for a horse!

Exeunt

They all exit.

Act 5 Scene 5

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-usurpèd royalty
From the dead temples of this bloody wretch
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.

Blasts of military music (trumpets and drums). RICHARD and RICHMOND enter; they fight. RICHARD is killed. The trumpet sounds to signal a retreat. RICHMOND retreats. RICHMOND and STANLEY, bearing the crown, return with several lords.

RICHMOND

God and your work be praised, victorious friends. The day is ours. The bloody dog is dead.

STANLEY

(offering him the crown) Courageous Richmond, you fought well. Here, I've taken back the stolen crown from that violent lowlife so it can grace your brows. Wear it, enjoy it, and make much of it.

RICHMOND

Great God of heaven, say amen to all this! But, tell me, is young George Stanley alive?

STANLEY

He is, my lord, and safe in Leicester, where, if you'd like, we can retreat to.

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.

RICHMOND

Which gentlemen on each side have been killed?

STANLEY

John Duke of Norfolk, Walter Lord Ferrers, Sir Robert
Brakenbury, and Sir William Brandon.

RICHMOND

Bury them in a manner appropriate to their noble births.
Proclaim that I'll pardon the soldiers who fled if they will return
and submit to my rule. As I vowed, I will unite the York and
Lancaster families.

Heaven, for a long time you have frowned upon the hatred
between them. Smile, then, on this beautiful union. What traitor
hears me and doesn't say amen? England has long been so
crazy that she was willing to hurt herself, brothers blindly shed
their brothers' blood, fathers rashly slaughtered their own sons,
sons were forced to butcher their fathers. All this further
divided the two families, which were already so badly divided.
Now let Richmond and Elizabeth, the true heirs of each royal
house, be joined together! And let their heirs, if you are willing,
God, enrich the future with peace and plenty! Gracious Lord,
blunt the swords of those traitors who mean to tear poor
England apart again! Let those who would mar this fair land's
peace with treason die before they can enjoy its wealth. Civil

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.

wounds now can heal, and peace can live again. So that
England may live a long life like this, let God say amen!

Exeunt

They all exit.