

ACT I

SCENE I. London. A street.

Enter GLOUCESTER, solus

GLOUCESTER

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
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 smooth'd his wrinkled front;
And now, instead of mounting barded steeds
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity:
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determin'd 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
In deadly hate the one against the other:
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
About a prophecy, which says that 'G'
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 armed guard
That waits upon your grace?

CLARENCE

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

GLOUCESTER

Upon what cause?

CLARENCE

Because my name is George.

GLOUCESTER

Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours;
He should, for that, commit your godfathers:
O, belike his majesty hath some intent
That you shall be new-christen'd 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;
And from the cross-row 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.
These, as I learn, and such like toys as these
Have moved his highness to commit me now.

GLOUCESTER

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
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 deliver'd?
We are not safe, Clarence; we are not safe.

CLARENCE

By heaven, I think there's 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
Lord Hastings was to her for his delivery?

GLOUCESTER

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 favour with the king,
To be her men and wear her livery:
The jealous o'erworn widow and herself,
Since that our brother dubb'd them gentlewomen.
Are mighty gossips in this monarchy.

BRAKENBURY

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

GLOUCESTER

Even so; an't please your worship, Brakenbury,
You may partake of any thing we say:
We speak no treason, man: we say the king
Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous;
We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue;
And that the queen's kindred are made gentle-folks:
How say you sir? Can you deny all this?

BRAKENBURY

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

GLOUCESTER

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

BRAKENBURY

What one, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

Her husband, knave: wouldst thou betray me?

BRAKENBURY

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

CLARENCE

We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.

GLOUCESTER

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

CLARENCE

I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

GLOUCESTER

Well, your imprisonment shall not be long;
Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE

I must perforce. Farewell.

Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and Guard

GLOUCESTER

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

Enter HASTINGS

HASTINGS

Good time of day unto my gracious lord!

GLOUCESTER

As much unto my good lord chamberlain!
Well are you welcome to the open air.
How hath your lordship brook'd imprisonment?

HASTINGS

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

GLOUCESTER

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

HASTINGS

More pity that the eagle should be mew'd,
While kites and buzzards prey at liberty.

GLOUCESTER

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.

GLOUCESTER

Now, by Saint Paul, this news is bad indeed.

O, he hath kept an evil diet long,
And overmuch consumed his royal person:
'Tis very grievous to be thought upon.

What, is he in his bed?

HASTINGS

He is.

GLOUCESTER

Go you before, and I will follow you.

Exit HASTINGS

He cannot live, I hope; and must not die
Till George be pack'd with post-horse up to heaven.
I'll in, to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
With lies well steel'd with weighty arguments;
And, if I fall 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.
What though I kill'd 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,
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

SCENE II. The same. Another street.

Enter the corpse of KING HENRY the Sixth, Gentlemen with halberds to guard it; LADY ANNE being the mourner

LADY ANNE

Set down, set down your honourable load,
If honour may be shrouded in a hearse,
Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
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,
Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughter'd son,
Stabb'd 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.
Cursed be the hand that made these fatal holes!
Cursed be the heart that had the heart to do it!
Cursed the blood that let this blood from hence!
More direful hap betide that hated wretch,
That makes us wretched by the death of thee,
Than I can wish to adders, spiders, toads,
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;
And that be heir to his unhappiness!
If ever he have wife, let her he made
A miserable by the death of him
As I am made by my poor lord and thee!
Come, now towards Chertsey with your holy load,
Taken from Paul's to be interred there;
And still, as you are weary of the weight,
Rest you, whiles I lament King Henry's corse.

Enter GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

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.

GLOUCESTER

Unmanner'd dog! stand thou, when I command:
Advance thy halbert higher than my breast,

Or, by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot,
And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

LADY ANNE

What, do you tremble? are you all afraid?
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 be gone.

GLOUCESTER

Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

LADY ANNE

Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble us not;
For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
Fill'd it with cursing cries and deep exclams.
If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.
O, gentlemen, see, see! dead Henry's wounds
Open their congeal'd mouths and bleed afresh!
Blush, Blush, thou lump of foul deformity;
For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
Provokes this deluge most unnatural.
O God, which this blood madest, revenge his death!
O earth, which this blood drink'st revenge his death!
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-govern'd arm hath butchered!

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

Villain, thou know'st no law of God nor man:
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

GLOUCESTER

But I know none, and therefore am no beast.

LADY ANNE

O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

By such despair, I should accuse myself.

LADY ANNE

And, by despairing, shouldst thou stand excused;
For doing worthy vengeance on thyself,
Which didst unworthy slaughter upon others.

GLOUCESTER

Say that I slew them not?

LADY ANNE

Why, then they are not dead:
But dead they are, and devilish slave, by thee.

GLOUCESTER

I did not kill your husband.

LADY ANNE

Why, then he is alive.

GLOUCESTER

Nay, he is dead; and slain by Edward's hand.

LADY ANNE

In thy foul throat thou liest: Queen Margaret saw
Thy murderous falchion smoking in his blood;
The which thou once didst bend against her breast,
But that thy brothers beat aside the point.

GLOUCESTER

I was provoked by her slanderous tongue,
which laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders.

LADY ANNE

Thou wast provoked by thy bloody mind.
Which never dreamt on aught but butcheries:
Didst thou not kill this king?

GLOUCESTER

I grant ye.

LADY ANNE

Dost grant me, hedgehog? then, God grant me too
Thou mayst be damned for that wicked deed!
O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous!

GLOUCESTER

The fitter for the King of heaven, that hath him.

LADY ANNE

He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

And thou unfit for any place but hell.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

Some dungeon.

GLOUCESTER

Your bed-chamber.

LADY ANNE

Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

GLOUCESTER

So will it, madam till I lie with you.

LADY ANNE

I hope so.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

Thou art the cause, and most accursed effect.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

Curse not thyself, fair creature thou art both.

LADY ANNE

I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

GLOUCESTER

It is a quarrel most unnatural,
To be revenged on him that loveth you.

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

His better doth not breathe upon the earth.

GLOUCESTER

He lives that loves thee better than he could.

LADY ANNE

Name him.

GLOUCESTER

Plantagenet.

LADY ANNE

Why, that was he.

GLOUCESTER

The selfsame name, but one of better nature.

LADY ANNE

Where is he?

GLOUCESTER

Here.

She spitteth at him

Why dost thou spit at me?

LADY ANNE

Would it were mortal poison, for thy sake!

GLOUCESTER

Never came poison from so sweet a place.

LADY ANNE

Never hung poison on a fouler toad.

Out of my sight! thou dost infect my eyes.

GLOUCESTER

Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

LADY ANNE

Would they were basilisks, to strike thee dead!

GLOUCESTER

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:

These eyes that 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,

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 bedash'd with rain: in that sad time

My manly eyes did scorn an humble tear;

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,

My proud heart sues, and prompts my tongue to speak.

She looks scornfully at him

Teach not thy lips such scorn, for they were made

For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.

If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,

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

Which if thou please to hide in this true bosom.

And let the soul forth that adareth thee,

I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,

And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

He lays his breast open: she offers at it with his sword

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

But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me.

Nay, now dispatch; 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward,

But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

Here she lets fall the sword

Take up the sword again, or take up me.

LADY ANNE

Arise, dissembler: though I wish thy death,
I will not be the executioner.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

I have already.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

I would I knew thy heart.

GLOUCESTER

'Tis figured in my tongue.

LADY ANNE

I fear me both are false.

GLOUCESTER

Then never man was true.

LADY ANNE

Well, well, put up your sword.

GLOUCESTER

Say, then, my peace is made.

LADY ANNE

That shall you know hereafter.

GLOUCESTER

But shall I live in hope?

LADY ANNE

All men, I hope, live so.

GLOUCESTER

Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

LADY ANNE

To take is not to give.

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

What is it?

GLOUCESTER

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

LADY ANNE

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

GLOUCESTER

Bid me farewell.

LADY ANNE

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

Exeunt LADY ANNE, TRESSEL, and BERKELEY

GLOUCESTER

Sirs, take up the corse.

GENTLEMEN

Towards Chertsey, noble lord?

GLOUCESTER

No, to White-Friars; there attend my coining.

Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.
What! I, that kill'd her husband and his father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of her hatred by;
Having God, her conscience, and these bars
against me,
And I nothing to back my suit at all,
But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
Ha!
Hath she forgot already that brave prince,
Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,
Stabb'd in my angry mood at Tewksbury?
A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
Framed in the prodigality of nature,
Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,
The spacious world cannot again afford
And will she yet debase her eyes on me,
That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince,
And made her widow to a woful bed?
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
On me, that halt and am unshapen thus?
My dukedom to a beggarly denier,
I do mistake my person all this while:
Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
Myself to be a marvellous proper man.
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass,
And entertain some score or two of tailors,
To study fashions to adorn my body:
Since I am crept in favour with myself,
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,
That I may see my shadow as I pass.

Exit

SCENE III. The palace.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, RIVERS, and GREY

RIVERS

Have patience, madam: there's no doubt his majesty
Will soon recover his accustom'd health.

GREY

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

If he were dead, what would betide of me?

RIVERS

No other harm but loss of such a lord.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

The loss of such a lord includes all harm.

GREY

The heavens have bless'd you with a goodly son,
To be your comforter when he is gone.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Oh, 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

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

Enter BUCKINGHAM and DERBY

GREY

Here come the lords of Buckingham and Derby.

BUCKINGHAM

Good time of day unto your royal grace!

DERBY

God make your majesty joyful as you have been!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

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

DERBY

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
From wayward sickness, and no grounded malice.

RIVERS

Saw you the king to-day, my Lord of Derby?

DERBY

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What likelihood of his amendment, lords?

BUCKINGHAM

Madam, good hope; his grace speaks cheerfully.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

God grant him health! Did you confer with him?

BUCKINGHAM

Madam, we did: he desires to make atonement
Betwixt the Duke of Gloucester and your brothers,
And betwixt them and my lord chamberlain;
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 highest.

Enter GLOUCESTER, HASTINGS, and DORSET

GLOUCESTER

They do me wrong, and I will not endure it:
Who are they that complain unto the king,
That I, forsooth, am stern, and love them not?
By holy Paul, they love his grace but lightly
That fill his ears with such dissentious rumours.
Because I cannot flatter and speak fair,
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive and cog,
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
By silken, sly, insinuating Jacks?

RIVERS

To whom in all this presence speaks your grace?

GLOUCESTER

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 person,--
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, of his own royal disposition,
And not provoked by any suitor else;
Aiming, belike, at your interior hatred,
Which in your outward actions shows itself
Against my kindred, brothers, and myself,

Makes him to send; that thereby he may gather
The ground of your ill-will, and so remove it.

GLOUCESTER

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;

You envy my advancement and my friends':
God grant we never may have need of you!

GLOUCESTER

Meantime, God grants that we have need of you:
Your brother is imprison'd by your means,
Myself disgraced, and the nobility
Held in contempt; whilst many fair promotions
Are daily given to ennoble those
That scarce, some two days since, were worth a noble.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

By Him that raised me to this careful height
From that contented hap which I enjoy'd,
I never did incense his majesty
Against the Duke of Clarence, but have been
An earnest advocate to plead for him.
My lord, you do me shameful injury,
Falsely to draw me in these vile suspects.

GLOUCESTER

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

RIVERS

She may, my lord, for--

GLOUCESTER

She may, Lord Rivers! why, who knows not so?
She may do more, sir, than denying that:
She may help you to many fair preferments,
And then deny her aiding hand therein,
And lay those honours on your high deserts.
What may she not? She may, yea, marry, may she--

RIVERS

What, marry, may she?

GLOUCESTER

What, marry, may she! marry with a king,
A bachelor, a handsome stripling too:
I wis your grandam had a wors'er match.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My Lord of Gloucester, I have too long borne
Your blunt upbraidings and your bitter scoffs:
By heaven, I will acquaint his majesty
With those gross taunts I often have endured.
I had rather be a country servant-maid
Than a great queen, with this condition,
To be thus taunted, scorn'd, and baited at:

Enter QUEEN MARGARET, behind

Small joy have I in being England's queen.

QUEEN MARGARET

And lessen'd be that small, God, I beseech thee!

Thy honour, state and seat is due to me.

GLOUCESTER

What! threat you me with telling of the king?

Tell him, and spare not: look, what I have said

I will avouch in presence of the king:

I dare adventure to be sent to the Tower.

'Tis time to speak; my pains are quite forgot.

QUEEN MARGARET

Out, devil! I remember them too well:

Thou slewest my husband Henry in the Tower,

And Edward, my poor son, at Tewksbury.

GLOUCESTER

Ere you were queen, yea, or your husband king,

I was a pack-horse in his great affairs;

A weeder-out of his proud adversaries,

A liberal rewarder of his friends:

To royalize his blood I spilt mine own.

QUEEN MARGARET

Yea, and much better blood than his or thine.

GLOUCESTER

In all which time you and your husband Grey

Were factious for the house of Lancaster;

And, Rivers, so were you. Was not your husband

In Margaret's battle at Saint Alban's slain?

Let me put in your minds, if you forget,

What you have been ere now, and what you are;

Withal, what I have been, and what I am.

QUEEN MARGARET

A murderous villain, and so still thou art.

GLOUCESTER

Poor Clarence did forsake his father, Warwick;

Yea, and forswore himself,--which Jesu pardon!--

QUEEN MARGARET

Which God revenge!

GLOUCESTER

To fight on Edward's party for the crown;

And for his meed, poor lord, he is mew'd up.

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

Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave the world,

Thou cacodemon! there thy kingdom is.

RIVERS

My Lord of Gloucester, in those busy days

Which here you urge to prove us enemies,

We follow'd then our lord, our lawful king:

So should we you, if you should be our king.

GLOUCESTER

If I should be! I had rather be a pedlar:

Far be it from my heart, the thought of it!

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

A little joy enjoys the queen thereof;
For I am she, and altogether joyless.
I can no longer hold me patient.

Advancing

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

GLOUCESTER

Foul wrinkled witch, what makest thou in my sight?

QUEEN MARGARET

But repetition of what thou hast marr'd;
That will I make before I let thee go.

GLOUCESTER

Wert thou not banished 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.
A husband and a son thou owest to me;
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.

GLOUCESTER

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, gavest the duke a clout
Steep'd in the faultless blood of pretty Rutland--
His curses, then from bitterness of soul
Denounced against thee, are all fall'n upon thee;
And God, not we, hath plagued thy bloody deed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

So just is God, to right the innocent.

HASTINGS

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

RIVERS

Tyrants themselves wept when it was reported.

DORSET

No man but prophesied revenge for it.

BUCKINGHAM

Northumberland, then present, wept to see it.

QUEEN MARGARET

What were you snarling all before I came,
Ready to catch each other by the throat,
And turn you all your hatred now on me?

Did York's dread curse prevail so much with heaven?
That Henry's death, my lovely Edward's death,
Their kingdom's loss, my woful banishment,
Could all but answer for that peevish brat?
Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
Why, then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!
If not by war, by surfeit die your king,
As ours by murder, to make him a king!
Edward thy son, which now is Prince of Wales,
For Edward my son, which was Prince of Wales,
Die in his youth by like untimely violence!
Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self!
Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's loss;
And see another, as I see thee now,
Deck'd in thy rights, as thou art stall'd in mine!
Long die thy happy days before thy death;
And, after many lengthen'd 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 stabb'd with bloody daggers: God, I pray him,
That none of you may live your natural age,
But by some unlook'd accident cut off!

GLOUCESTER

Have done thy charm, thou hateful wither'd hag!

QUEEN MARGARET

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

GLOUCESTER

Margaret.

QUEEN MARGARET

Richard!

GLOUCESTER

Ha!

QUEEN MARGARET

I call thee not.

GLOUCESTER

I cry thee mercy then, for I had thought
That thou hadst call'd me all these bitter names.

QUEEN MARGARET

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

GLOUCESTER

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Thus have you breathed your curse against yourself.

QUEEN MARGARET

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

RIVERS

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

QUEEN MARGARET

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

Dispute not with her; she is lunatic.

QUEEN MARGARET

Peace, master marquess, you are malapert:
Your fire-new stamp of honour 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.

GLOUCESTER

Good counsel, marry: learn it, learn it, marquess.

DORSET

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

GLOUCESTER

Yea, and much more: but I was born so high,
Our aery buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind and scorns the sun.

QUEEN MARGARET

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

BUCKINGHAM

Have done! for shame, if not for charity.

QUEEN MARGARET

Urge neither charity nor shame to me:
Uncharitably with me have you dealt,
And shamefully by you my hopes are butcher'd.

My charity is outrage, life my shame
And in that shame still live my sorrow's rage.

BUCKINGHAM

Have done, have done.

QUEEN MARGARET

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

BUCKINGHAM

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

QUEEN MARGARET

I'll not believe but they ascend the sky,
And there awake God's gentle-sleeping peace.
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,
And all their ministers attend on him.

GLOUCESTER

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?
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

My hair doth stand on end to hear her curses.

RIVERS

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

GLOUCESTER

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

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I never did her any, to my knowledge.

GLOUCESTER

But 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,
He is frank'd up to fattening for his pains
God pardon them that are the cause of it!

RIVERS

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

GLOUCESTER

So do I ever:

Aside

being well-advised.

For had I cursed now, I had cursed myself.

Enter CATESBY

CATESBY

Madam, his majesty doth call for you,
And for your grace; and you, my noble lords.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Catesby, we come. Lords, will you go with us?

RIVERS

Madam, we will attend your grace.

Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I, indeed, have laid in darkness,
I do bewEEP to many simple gulls
Namely, to Hastings, Derby, Buckingham;
And say it is 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, Vaughan, Grey:
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 villany
With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ;
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.

Enter two Murderers

But, soft! here come my executioners.
How now, my hardy, stout resolved mates!
Are you now going to dispatch this deed?

First Murderer

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

GLOUCESTER

Well thought upon; I have it here about me.

Gives the warrant

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

First Murderer

Tush!

Fear not, my lord, we will not stand to prate;
Talkers are no good doers: be assured
We come to use our hands and not our tongues.

GLOUCESTER

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

First Murderer

We will, my noble lord.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. London. The Tower.

Enter CLARENCE and BRAKENBURY

BRAKENBURY

Why looks your grace so heavily today?

CLARENCE

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

BRAKENBURY

What was your dream? I long to hear you tell it.

CLARENCE

Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower,
And was embark'd 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,
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,
Into the tumbling billows of the main.
Lord, Lord! methought, what pain it was to drown!
What dreadful noise of waters in mine ears!
What ugly sights of death within mine eyes!
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea:

Some lay in dead men's skulls; and, in those holes
Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,
As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,
Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.

BRAKENBURY

Had you such leisure in the time of death
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
Kept in my soul, and would not let it forth
To seek the empty, vast and wandering air;
But smother'd it within my panting bulk,
Which almost burst to belch it in the sea.

BRAKENBURY

Awaked you not with this sore agony?

CLARENCE

O, no, my dream was lengthen'd after life;
O, then began the tempest to my soul,
Who pass'd, methought, the melancholy flood,
With that grim ferryman which poets write of,
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick;
Who cried aloud, 'What scourge for perjury
Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?'
And so he vanish'd: then came wandering by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood; and he squeak'd out aloud,
'Clarence is come; false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
That stabb'd me in the field by Tewksbury;
Seize on him, Furies, take him to your torments!'
With that, methoughts, a legion of foul fiends
Environ'd me about, and howled in mine ears
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 the dream.

BRAKENBURY

No marvel, my lord, though it affrighted you;
I promise, I am afraid to hear you tell it.

CLARENCE

O Brakenbury, I have done those things,
Which now bear evidence against my soul,
For Edward's sake; and see how he requites me!
O God! if my deep prayers cannot appease thee,
But thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds,
Yet execute thy wrath in me alone,
O, spare my guiltless wife and my poor children!
I pray thee, gentle keeper, stay by me;
My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep.

BRAKENBURY

I will, my lord: God give your grace good rest!

CLARENCE sleeps

Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
Makes the night morning, and the noon-tide night.
Princes have but their tides for their glories,
An outward honour for an inward toil;
And, for unfelt imagination,
They often feel a world of restless cares:
So that, betwixt their tides and low names,
There's nothing differs but the outward fame.

Enter the two Murderers

First Murderer

Ho! who's here?

BRAKENBURY

In God's name what are you, and how came you hither?

First Murderer

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

BRAKENBURY

Yea, are you so brief?

Second Murderer

O sir, it is better to be brief than tedious. Show
him our commission; talk no more.

BRAKENBURY reads it

BRAKENBURY

I am, in this, commanded to deliver
The noble Duke of Clarence to your hands:
I will not reason what is meant hereby,
Because I will be guiltless of the meaning.
Here are the keys, there sits the duke asleep:
I'll to the king; and signify to him
That thus I have resign'd my charge to you.

First Murderer

Do so, it is a point of wisdom: fare you well.

Exit BRAKENBURY

Second Murderer

What, shall we stab him as he sleeps?

First Murderer

No; then he will say 'twas done cowardly, when he wakes.

Second Murderer

When he wakes! why, fool, he shall never wake till
the judgment-day.

First Murderer

Why, then he will say we stabbed him sleeping.

Second Murderer

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

First Murderer

What, art thou afraid?

Second Murderer

Not to kill him, having a warrant for it; but to be damned for killing him, from which no warrant can defend us.

First Murderer

I thought thou hadst been resolute.

Second Murderer

So I am, to let him live.

First Murderer

Back to the Duke of Gloucester, tell him so.

Second Murderer

I pray thee, stay a while: I hope my holy humour will change; 'twas wont to hold me but while one would tell twenty.

First Murderer

How dost thou feel thyself now?

Second Murderer

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

First Murderer

Remember our reward, when the deed is done.

Second Murderer

'Zounds, he dies: I had forgot the reward.

First Murderer

Where is thy conscience now?

Second Murderer

In the Duke of Gloucester's purse.

First Murderer

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

Second Murderer

Let it go; there's few or none will entertain it.

First Murderer

How if it come to thee again?

Second Murderer

I'll not meddle with it: it is a dangerous thing: it makes a man a coward: a man cannot steal, but it accuseth him; he cannot swear, but it cheques him; he cannot lie with his neighbour's wife, but it detects him: 'tis a blushing shamefast spirit that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles: it made me once restore a purse of gold that I found; it beggars any man that keeps it: it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well endeavours to trust to himself and to live without it.

First Murderer

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

Second Murderer

Take the devil in thy mind, and relieve him not: he would insinuate with thee but to make thee sigh.

First Murderer

Tut, I am strong-framed, he cannot prevail with me, I warrant thee.

Second Murderer

Spoke like a tail fellow that respects his reputation. Come, shall we to this gear?

First Murderer

Take him over the costard with the hilts of thy sword, and then we will chop him in the malmsey-butt in the next room.

Second Murderer

O excellent devise! make a sop of him.

First Murderer

Hark! he stirs: shall I strike?

Second Murderer

No, first let's reason with him.

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?

Second Murderer

A man, as you are.

CLARENCE

But not, as I am, royal.

Second Murderer

Nor you, as we are, loyal.

CLARENCE

Thy voice is thunder, but thy looks are humble.

Second Murderer

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

CLARENCE

How darkly and how deadly dost thou speak!

Your eyes do menace me: why look you pale?

Who sent you hither? Wherefore do you come?

Both

To, to, to--

CLARENCE

To murder me?

Both

Ay, ay.

CLARENCE

You scarcely have the hearts to tell me so,

And therefore cannot have the hearts to do it.

Wherein, my friends, have I offended you?

First Murderer

Offended us you have not, but the king.

CLARENCE

I shall be reconciled to him again.

Second Murderer

Never, my lord; therefore prepare to die.

CLARENCE

Are you call'd forth from out a world of men

To slay the innocent? What is my offence?

Where are the evidence that do accuse me?

What lawful quest have given their verdict up

Unto the frowning judge? or who pronounced

The bitter sentence of poor Clarence' death?

Before I be convict by course of law,

To threaten me with death is most unlawful.
I charge you, as you hope to have redemption
By Christ's dear blood shed for our grievous sins,
That you depart and lay no hands on me
The deed you undertake is damnable.

First Murderer

What we will do, we do upon command.

Second Murderer

And he that hath commanded is the king.

CLARENCE

Erroneous vassal! the great King of kings
Hath in the tables of his law commanded
That thou shalt do no murder: and wilt thou, then,
Spurn at his edict and fulfil a man's?
Take heed; for he holds vengeance in his hands,
To hurl upon their heads that break his law.

Second Murderer

And that same vengeance doth he hurl on thee,
For false forswearing and for murder too:
Thou didst receive the holy sacrament,
To fight in quarrel of the house of Lancaster.

First Murderer

And, like a traitor to the name of God,
Didst break that vow; and with thy treacherous blade
Unrip'dst 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,
When thou hast broke it in so dear degree?

CLARENCE

Alas! for whose sake did I that ill deed?
For Edward, for my brother, for his sake: Why, sirs,
He sends ye not to murder me for this
For in this sin he is as deep as I.
If God will be revenged for this deed.
O, know you yet, he doth it publicly,
Take not the quarrel from his powerful arm;
He needs no indirect nor lawless course
To cut off those that have offended him.

First Murderer

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

CLARENCE

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

First Murderer

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

CLARENCE

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

Second Murderer

You are deceived, your brother Gloucester hates you.

CLARENCE

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

Both

Ay, so we will.

CLARENCE

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

First Murderer

Ay, millstones; as be lesson'd us to weep.

CLARENCE

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

First Murderer

Right,

As snow in harvest. Thou deceivest thyself:
'Tis he that sent us hither now to slaughter thee.

CLARENCE

It cannot be; for when I parted with him,
He hugg'd me in his arms, and swore, with sobs,
That he would labour my delivery.

Second Murderer

Why, so he doth, now he delivers thee
From this world's thralldom to the joys of heaven.

First Murderer

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

CLARENCE

Hast thou that holy feeling in thy soul,
To counsel me to make my peace with God,
And art thou yet to thy own soul so blind,
That thou wilt war with God by murdering me?
Ah, sirs, consider, he that set you on
To do this deed will hate you for the deed.

Second Murderer

What shall we do?

CLARENCE

Relent, and save your souls.

First Murderer

Relent! 'tis cowardly and womanish.

CLARENCE

Not to relent is beastly, savage, devilish.
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?

My friend, I spy some pity in thy looks:
O, if thine eye be not a flatterer,
Come thou on my side, and entreat for me,
As you would beg, were you in my distress
A begging prince what beggar pities not?

Second Murderer

Look behind you, my lord.

First Murderer

Take that, and that: if all this will not do,

Stabs him

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

Exit, with the body

Second Murderer

A bloody deed, and desperately dispatch'd!
How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
Of this most grievous guilty murder done!

Re-enter First Murderer

First Murderer

How now! what mean'st thou, that thou help'st me not?
By heavens, the duke shall know how slack thou art!

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

So do not I: go, coward as thou art.
Now must I hide his body in some hole,
Until the duke take order for his burial:
And when I have my meed, I must away;
For this will out, and here I must not stay.

ACT II

SCENE I. London. The palace.

Flourish. Enter KING EDWARD IV sick, QUEEN ELIZABETH, 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 embassy
From my Redeemer to redeem me hence;
And now in peace my soul shall part to heaven,
Since I have set my friends at peace on earth.
Rivers and Hastings, take each other's hand;
Dissemble not your hatred, swear your love.

RIVERS

By heaven, my heart is purged from grudging hate:
And with my hand I seal my true heart's love.

HASTINGS