

Richard II

1.2

*Enter John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, with the
Duchess of Gloucester*

JOHN OF GAUNT

Alas, the part I had in Gloucester's blood
Doth more solicit me than your exclams
To stir against the butchers of his life.
But since correction lieth in those hands
Which made the fault that we cannot correct, 5
Put we our quarrel to the will of heaven,
Who, when they see the hours ripe on earth,
Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.

DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur?
Hath love in thy old blood no living fire? 10
Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
Or seven fair branches springing from one root.
Some of those seven are dried by nature's course,
Some of those branches by the destinies cut; 15
But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,
One vial full of Edward's sacred blood,
One flourishing branch of his most royal root,
Is cracked, and all the precious liquor spilt;
Is hacked down, and his summer leaves all faded 20
By envy's hand and murder's bloody axe.
Ah, Gaunt, his blood was thine! That bed, that womb,
That mettle, that self mould that fashioned thee,
Made him a man; and though thou liv'st and
breathest,
Yet art thou slain in him. Thou dost consent 25
In some large measure to thy father's death
In that thou seest thy wretched brother die,
Who was the model of thy father's life.
Call it not patience, Gaunt, it is despair.
In suff'ring thus thy brother to be slaughtered 30
Thou show'st the naked pathway to thy life,

Teaching stern murder how to butcher thee.
That which in mean men we entitle patience
Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.
What shall I say? To safeguard thine own life 35
The best way is to venge my Gloucester's death.

JOHN OF GAUNT

God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute,
His deputy anointed in his sight,
Hath caused his death; the which if wrongfully,
Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift 40
An angry arm against his minister.

DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

Where then, alas, may I complain myself?

JOHN OF GAUNT

To God, the widow's champion and defence.

DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

Why then, I will. Farewell, old Gaunt.
Thou goest to Coventry, there to behold 45
Our cousin Hereford and fell Mowbray fight.
O, set my husband's wrongs on Hereford's spear,
That it may enter butcher Mowbray's breast!
Or if misfortune miss the first career,
Be Mowbray's sins so heavy in his bosom 50
That they may break his foaming courser's back
And throw the rider headlong in the lists,
A caitiff, recreant to my cousin Hereford!
Farewell, old Gaunt. Thy sometimes brother's wife
With her companion, grief, must end her life. 55

JOHN OF GAUNT

Sister, farewell. I must to Coventry.
As much good stay with thee as go with me.

DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

Yet one word more. Grief boundeth where it falls,
Not with the empty hollowness, but weight.
I take my leave before I have begun, 60
For sorrow ends not when it seemeth done.
Commend me to thy brother, Edmund York.
Lo, this is all.±±Nay, yet depart not so!
Though this be all, do not so quickly go.
I shall remember more. Bid him±±ah, what?±± 65
With all good speed at Pleshey visit me.

Alack, and what shall good old York there see
But empty lodgings and unfurnished walls,
Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones,
And what hear there for welcome but my groans?
Therefore commend me; let him not come there
To seek out sorrow that dwells everywhere.
Desolate, desolate will I hence and die.
The last leave of thee takes my weeping eye.

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Exeunt [severally]