

1 Henry VI

2.4

A rose brier. Enter Richard Plantagenet, the Earl of Warwick, the Duke of Somerset, William de la Pole (the Earl of Suffolk), Vernon, and a Lawyer

RICHARD PLANTAGENET

Great lords and gentlemen, what means this silence?
Dare no man answer in a case of truth?

SUFFOLK

Within the Temple hall we were too loud.
The garden here is more convenient.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET

Then say at once if I maintained the truth; 5
Or else was wrangling Somerset in th'error?

SUFFOLK

Faith, I have been a truant in the law,
And never yet could frame my will to it,
And therefore frame the law unto my will.

SOMERSET

Judge you, my lord of Warwick, then between us. 10

WARWICK

Between two hawks, which flies the higher pitch,
Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth,
Between two blades, which bears the better temper,
Between two horses, which doth bear him best,
Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye, 15
I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgement;
But in these nice sharp quilllets of the law,
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET

Tut, tut, here is a mannerly forbearance.
The truth appears so naked on my side 20
That any purblind eye may find it out.

SOMERSET

And on my side it is so well apparelled,
So clear, so shining, and so evident,
That it will glimmer through a blind man's eye.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET

Since you are tongue-tied and so loath to speak, 25

In dumb significant proclaim your thoughts.
Let him that is a true-born gentleman
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this briar pluck a white rose with me. 30
He plucks a white rose

SOMERSET

Let him that is no coward nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.
He plucks a red rose

WARWICK

I love no colours, and without all colour
Of base insinuating flattery 35
I pluck this white rose with Plantagenet.

SUFFOLK

I pluck this red rose with young Somerset,
And say withal I think he held the right.

VERNON

Stay, lords and gentlemen, and pluck no more
Till you conclude that he upon whose side 40
The fewest roses from the tree are cropped
Shall yield the other in the right opinion.

SOMERSET

Good Master Vernon, it is well objected.
If I have fewest, I subscribe in silence.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET And I. 45

VERNON

Then for the truth and plainness of the case
I pluck this pale and maiden blossom here,
Giving my verdict on the white rose' side.

SOMERSET

Prick not your finger as you pluck it off,
Lest, bleeding, you do paint the white rose red, 50
And fall on my side so against your will.

VERNON

If I, my lord, for my opinion bleed,
Opinion shall be surgeon to my hurt
And keep me on the side where still I am.

SOMERSET Well, well, come on! Who else? 55

LAWYER

Unless my study and my books be false,
 The argument you held was wrong in law;
 In sign whereof I pluck a white rose too.
RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 Now Somerset, where is your argument?
SOMERSET
 Here in my scabbard, meditating that 60
 Shall dye your white rose in a bloody red.
RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 Meantime your cheeks do counterfeit our roses,
 For pale they look with fear, as witnessing
 The truth on our side.
SOMERSET No, Plantagenet,
 'Tis not for fear, but anger, that thy cheeks 65
 Blush for pure shame to counterfeit our roses,
 And yet thy tongue will not confess thy error.
RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?
SOMERSET
 Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?
RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 Ay, sharp and piercing, to maintain his truth, 70
 Whiles thy consuming canker eats his falsehood.
SOMERSET
 Well, I'll find friends to wear my bleeding roses,
 That shall maintain what I have said is true,
 Where false Plantagenet dare not be seen.
RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 Now, by this maiden blossom in my hand, 75
 I scorn thee and thy fashion, peevish boy.
SUFFOLK
 Turn not thy scorns this way, Plantagenet.
RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 Proud Pole, I will, and scorn both him and thee.
SUFFOLK
 I'll turn my part thereof into thy throat.
SOMERSET
 Away, away, good William de le Pole. 80
 We grace the yeoman by conversing with him.
WARWICK
 Now, by God's will, thou wrong'st him, Somerset.
 His grandfather was Lionel Duke of Clarence,

Third son to the third Edward, King of England.
 Spring crestless yeomen from so deep a root? 85

RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 He bears him on the place's privilege,
 Or durst not for his craven heart say thus.

SOMERSET
 By him that made me, I'll maintain my words
 On any plot of ground in Christendom.
 Was not thy father, Richard Earl of Cambridge, 90
 For treason executed in our late king's days?
 And by his treason stand'st not thou attainted,
 Corrupted, and exempt from ancient gentry?
 His trespass yet lives guilty in thy blood,
 And till thou be restored thou art a yeoman. 95

RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 My father was attache'd, not attainted;
 Condemned to die for treason, but no traitor±±
 And that I'll prove on better men than Somerset,
 Were growing time once ripened to my will.
 For your partaker Pole, and you yourself, 100
 I'll note you in my book of memory,
 To scourge you for this apprehension.
 Look to it well, and say you are well warned.

SOMERSET
 Ah, thou shalt find us ready for thee still,
 And know us by these colours for thy foes, 105
 For these my friends, in spite of thee, shall wear.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET
 And, by my soul, this pale and angry rose,
 As cognizance of my blood-drinking hate,
 Will I forever, and my faction, wear
 Until it wither with me to my grave, 110
 Or flourish to the height of my degree.

SUFFOLK
 Go forward, and be choked with thy ambition.
 And so farewell until I meet thee next.

Exit

SOMERSET
 Have with thee, Pole.±±Farewell, ambitious Richard.

Exit

RICHARD PLANTAGENET

How I am braved, and must perforce endure it!

115

WARWICK

This blot that they object against your house
Shall be wiped out in the next parliament,
Called for the truce of Winchester and Gloucester.
An if thou be not then created York,
I will not live to be accounted Warwick. 120
Meantime, in signal of my love to thee,
Against proud Somerset and William Pole,
Will I upon thy party wear this rose.
And here I prophesy: this brawl today,
Grown to this faction in the Temple garden, 125
Shall send, between the red rose and the white,
A thousand souls to death and deadly night.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET

Good Master Vernon, I am bound to you,
That you on my behalf would pluck a flower.

VERNON

In your behalf still will I wear the same. 130

LAWYER And so will I.

RICHARD PLANTAGENET Thanks, gentles.

Come, let us four to dinner. I dare say
This quarrel will drink blood another day.
Exeunt. The rose brier is removed