

Richard Duke of York

1.4

Alarum. Enter Richard Duke of York

YORK

The army of the Queen hath got the field;
My uncles both are slain in rescuing me;
And all my followers to the eager foe
Turn back, and fly like ships before the wind,
Or lambs pursued by hunger-starve'd wolves. 5

My sons±±God knows what hath bechance'd them.

But this I know±±they have demeaned themselves
Like men born to renown by life or death.

Three times did Richard make a lane to me,
And thrice cried, 'Courage, father, fight it out!' 10

And full as oft came Edward to my side,
With purple falchion painted to the hilt
In blood of those that had encountered him.

And when the hardiest warriors did retire,
Richard cried, 'Charge and give no foot of ground!' 15

□

And cried 'A crown or else a glorious tomb!
A sceptre or an earthly sepulchre!'

With this, we charged again±±but out, alas±±

We bodged again, as I have seen a swan 20

With bootless labour swim against the tide
And spend her strength with over-matching waves.

A short alarum within

Ah, hark±±the fatal followers do pursue,
And I am faint and cannot fly their fury;
And were I strong, I would not shun their fury. 25

The sands are numbered that makes up my life.

Here must I stay, and here my life must end.

*Enter Queen Margaret, Lord Clifford, the Earl of
Northumberland, and the young Prince Edward,
with soldiers*

Come bloody Clifford, rough Northumberland±±

I dare your quenchless fury to more rage!

I am your butt, and I abide your shot. 30

NORTHUMBERLAND

Yield to our mercy, proud Plantagenet.

CLIFFORD

Ay, to such mercy as his ruthless arm,
With downright payment, showed unto my father.
Now PhaeËton hath tumbled from his car,
And made an evening at the noontide prick.

35

YORK

My ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth
A bird that will revenge upon you all,
And in that hope I throw mine eyes to heaven,
Scorning whate'er you can afflict me with.
Why come you not? What±±multitudes, and fear?

40

CLIFFORD

So cowards fight when they can fly no further;
So doves do peck the falcon's piercing talons;
So desperate thieves, all hopeless of their lives,
Breathe out invectives 'gainst the officers.

YORK

O, Clifford, but bethink thee once again,
And in thy thought o'errun my former time,
And, if thou canst for blushing, view this face
And bite thy tongue, that slanders him with cowardice
Whose frown hath made thee faint and fly ere this.

45

CLIFFORD

I will not bandy with thee word for word,
But buckle with thee blows twice two for one.

50

[He draws his sword]

QUEEN MARGARET

Hold, valiant Clifford: for a thousand causes
I would prolong a while the traitor's life.
Wrath makes him deaf±±speak thou, Northumberland.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Hold, Clifford±±do not honour him so much
To prick thy finger though to wound his heart.
What valour were it when a cur doth grin
For one to thrust his hand between his teeth
When he might spurn him with his foot away?
It is war's prize to take all vantages,
And ten to one is no impeach of valour.

55

60

They [fight and] take York

CLIFFORD

Ay, ay, so strives the woodcock with the gin.

NORTHUMBERLAND

So doth the cony struggle in the net.

YORK

So triumph thieves upon their conquered booty,
So true men yield, with robbers so o'ermatched.

65

NORTHUMBERLAND *(to the Queen)*

What would your grace have done unto him now?

QUEEN MARGARET

Brave warriors, Clifford and Northumberland,
Come make him stand upon this molehill here,
That wrought at mountains with outstretch'd arms
Yet parted but the shadow with his hand.

70

(To York) What was it you that would be England's
king?

Was't you that revelled in our Parliament,
And made a preachment of your high descent?
Where are your mess of sons to back you now?

The wanton Edward and the lusty George?

75

And where's that valiant crookback prodigy,
Dickie, your boy, that with his grumbling voice
Was wont to cheer his dad in mutinies?

Or with the rest where is your darling Rutland?

Look, York, I stained this napkin with the blood

That valiant Clifford with his rapier's point

Made issue from the bosom of thy boy.

And if thine eyes can water for his death,

I give thee this to dry thy cheeks withal.

Alas, poor York, but that I hate thee deadly

85

I should lament thy miserable state.

I prithee, grieve, to make me merry, York.

What hath thy fiery heart so parched thine entrails

That not a tear can fall for Rutland's death?

Why art thou patient, man? Thou shouldst be mad,

90

And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus.

Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance.

Thou wouldst be fee'd, I see, to make me sport.

York cannot speak unless he wear a crown.

(To her men) A crown for York, and, lords, bow low to

him.

95

Hold you his hands whilst I do set it on.

She puts a paper crown on York's head

Ay, marry, sir, now looks he like a king,

Ay, this is he that took King Henry's chair,

And this is he was his adopted heir.

But how is it that great Plantagenet

100

Is crowned so soon and broke his solemn oath?

As I bethink me, you should not be king

Till our King Henry had shook hands with death.

And will you pale your head in Henry's glory,

And rob his temples of the diadem

105

Now, in his life, against your holy oath?

O 'tis a fault too, too, unpardonable.

Off with the crown,

[She knocks it from his head]

and with the crown his head,

And whilst we breathe, take time to do him dead.

CLIFFORD

That is my office for my father's sake.

110

QUEEN MARGARET

Nay, stay±±let's hear the orisons he makes.

YORK

She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France,

Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth±±

How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex

To triumph like an Amazonian trull

115

Upon their woes whom fortune captivates!

But that thy face is visor-like, unchanging,

Made impudent with use of evil deeds,

I would essay, proud Queen, to make thee blush.

To tell thee whence thou cam'st, of whom derived,

120

Were shame enough to shame thee±±wert thou not

shameless.

Thy father bears the type of King of Naples,

Of both the Sicils, and Jerusalem±±

Yet not so wealthy as an English yeoman.

Hath that poor monarch taught thee to insult?

125

It needs not, nor it boots thee not, proud Queen,

Unless the adage must be verified

That beggars mounted run their horse to death.
 'Tis beauty that doth oft make women proud±±
 But, God he knows, thy share thereof is small; 130
 'Tis virtue that doth make them most admired±±
 The contrary doth make thee wondered at;
 'Tis government that makes them seem divine±±
 The want thereof makes thee abominable.
 Thou art as opposite to every good 135
 As the antipodes are unto us,
 Or as the south to the septentrion.
 O tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!
 How couldst thou drain the life-blood of the child
 To bid the father wipe his eyes withal, 140
 And yet be seen to bear a woman's face?
 Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible±±
 Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
 Bidd'st thou me rage? Why, now thou hast thy wish.
 Wouldst have me weep? Why, now thou hast thy will. 145
 For raging wind blows up incessant showers,
 And when the rage allays the rain begins.
 These tears are my sweet Rutland's obsequies,
 And every drop cries vengeance for his death
 'Gainst thee, fell Clifford, and thee, false Frenchwoman. 150

NORTHUMBERLAND

Beshrew me, but his passions move me so
 That hardly can I check my eyes from tears.

YORK

That face of his the hungry cannibals
 Would not have touched, would not have stained
 with blood±±
 But you are more inhuman, more inexorable, 155
 O, ten times more than tigers of Hyrcania.
 See, ruthless Queen, a hapless father's tears.
 This cloth thou dipped'st in blood of my sweet boy,
 And I with tears do wash the blood away.
 Keep thou the napkin and go boast of this, 160
 And if thou tell'st the heavy story right,
 Upon my soul the hearers will shed tears,
 Yea, even my foes will shed fast-falling tears
 And say, `Alas, it was a piteous deed'.

There, take the crown±±and with the crown, my
curse: 165

And in thy need such comfort come to thee
As now I reap at thy too cruel hand.
Hard-hearted Clifford, take me from the world.
My soul to heaven, my blood upon your heads.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Had he been slaughter-man to all my kin, 170
I should not, for my life, but weep with him,
To see how inly sorrow gripes his soul.

QUEEN MARGARET

What±±weeping-ripe, my lord Northumberland?
Think but upon the wrong he did us all,
And that will quickly dry thy melting tears. 175

CLIFFORD

Here's for my oath, here's for my father's death.
He stabs York

QUEEN MARGARET

And here's to right our gentle-hearted King.
She stabs York

YORK

Open thy gate of mercy, gracious God±±
My soul flies through these wounds to seek out thee.
[He dies]

QUEEN MARGARET

Off with his head and set it on York gates, 180
So York may overlook the town of York.
Flourish. Exeunt with York's body