

Richard III

1.4

Enter George Duke of Clarence and [Sir Robert Brackenbury]

[BRACKENBURY]

Why looks your grace so heavily today?

CLARENCE

O I have passed a miserable night,
So full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights,
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.

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[BRACKENBURY]

What was your dream, my lord? I pray you, tell me.

CLARENCE

Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower,
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; there we looked toward England,
And cited up a thousand heavy 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 sought to stay him±±overboard
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 wrecks,
Ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon,
Wedges of gold, great ouches, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scattered 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±±

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As 'twere in scorn of eyes±±reflecting gems,
Which wooed the slimy bottom of the deep
And mocked the dead bones that lay scattered by.

[BRACKENBURY]

Had you such leisure in the time of death,
To gaze upon these secrets of the deep?

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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,
But smothered it within my panting bulk, 40
Who almost burst to belch it in the sea.

[BRACKENBURY]

Awaked you not in this sore agony?

CLARENCE

No, no, my dream was lengthened after life.
O then began the tempest to my soul!
I passed, methought, the melancholy flood, 45
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, renowneÁd Warwick,
Who cried aloud, 'What scourge for perjury 50
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 is come: false, fleeting, perjured Clarence, 55
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 howleÁd in mine ears
Such hideous cries that with the very noise 60
I trembling waked, and for a season after
Could not believe but that I was in hell,
Such terrible impression made my dream.

[BRACKENBURY]

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

CLARENCE

Ah, Brackenbury, I have done these things,
That now give evidence against my soul,
For Edward's sake; and see how he requites me.
Keeper, I pray thee, sit by me awhile.
My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep. 70

[BRACKENBURY]

I will, my lord. God give your grace good rest.

Clarence sleeps

Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
Makes the night morning and the noontide night.
Princes have but their titles for their glories,
An outward honour for an inward toil, 75
And for unfelt imaginations
They often feel a world of restless cares;
So that, between their titles and low name,
There's nothing differs but the outward fame.

Enter two Murderers

FIRST MURDERER Ho, who's here? 80

BRACKENBURY

What wouldst thou, fellow? And how cam'st thou
hither?

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

BRACKENBURY What, so brief?

FIRST MURDERER 'Tis better, sir, than to be tedious. (To 85
Second Murderer) Let him see our commission, and talk
no more.

Brackenbury reads

BRACKENBURY

I am in this commanded to deliver
The noble Duke of Clarence to your hands.
I will not reason what is meant hereby, 90
Because I will be guiltless of the meaning.
There lies the Duke asleep, and there the keys.

[He throws down the keys]

I'll to the King and signify to him
That thus I have resigned to you my charge.

FIRST MURDERER You may, sir; 'tis a point of wisdom. 95
Fare you well.

Exit Brackenbury

SECOND MURDERER What, shall I stab him as he sleeps?

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

SECOND MURDERER Why, he shall never wake until the 100 great judgement day.

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

SECOND MURDERER The urging of that word 'judgement' hath bred a kind of remorse in me. 105

FIRST MURDERER What, art thou 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. 110

SECOND MURDERER So I am±±to let him live.

FIRST MURDERER I'll back to the Duke of Gloucester and tell him so.

SECOND MURDERER Nay, I pray thee. Stay a little. I hope this passionate humour of mine will change. It was 115 wont to hold me but while one tells twenty.
[He counts to twenty]

FIRST MURDERER How dost thou feel thyself now?

SECOND MURDERER Some certain dregs of conscience are yet within me.

FIRST MURDERER Remember our reward, when the deed's 120 done.

SECOND MURDERER 'Swounds, he dies. I had forgot the reward.

FIRST MURDERER Where's thy conscience now?

SECOND MURDERER O, in the Duke of Gloucester's purse. 125

FIRST MURDERER 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? 130

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 neighbour'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 endeavours to trust to himself and
live without it. 140

FIRST MURDERER 'Swounds, '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 145
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? 150

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. 155

FIRST MURDERER Soft, he wakes.

SECOND MURDERER Strike!

FIRST MURDERER No, we'll reason with him.

CLARENCE

Where art thou, keeper? Give me a cup of wine.

SECOND MURDERER
You shall have wine enough, my lord, anon. 160

CLARENCE

In God's name, what art thou?

FIRST MURDERER A man, as you are.

CLARENCE 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. 165

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?

SECOND MURDERER

To, to, to±±

CLARENCE To murder me.

BOTH MURDERERS Ay, ay.

CLARENCE

You scarcely have the hearts to tell me so, 170
 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. 175

CLARENCE

Are you drawn forth among a world of men
 To slay the innocent? What is my offence?
 Where is the evidence that doth accuse me?
 What lawful quest have given their verdict up
 Unto the frowning judge, or who pronounced 180
 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, 185
 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

Erroneous vassals, the great King of Kings 190
 Hath in the table of his law commanded
 That thou shalt do no murder. Will you then
 Spurn at his edict, and fulfil a man's?
 Take heed, for he holds vengeance in his hand
 To hurl upon their heads that break his law. 195

SECOND MURDERER
 And that same vengeance doth he hurl on thee,
 For false forswearing, and for murder too.
 Thou didst receive the sacrament to fight

In quarrel of the house of Lancaster.

FIRST MURDERER

And, like a traitor to the name of God, 200
Didst break that vow, and with thy treacherous blade
Unripped'st the bowels of thy sov'reign's son.

SECOND MURDERER

Whom thou wast sworn to cherish and defend.

FIRST MURDERER

How canst thou urge God's dreadful law to us,
When thou hast broke it in such dear degree? 205

CLARENCE

Alas, for whose sake did I that ill deed?
For Edward, for my brother, for his sake.
He sends ye not to murder me for this,
For in that sin he is as deep as I.
If God will be avenged for the deed, 210
O know you yet, he doth it publicly.
Take not the quarrel from his pow'rful arm;
He needs no indirect or lawless course
To cut off those that have offended him.

FIRST MURDERER

Who made thee then a bloody minister 215
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
Provoke us hither now to slaughter thee. 220

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,
Who shall reward you better for my life 225
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

Tell him, when that our princely father York 230
Blessed 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 he lessoned us to weep. 235

CLARENCE

O do not slander him, for he is kind.

FIRST MURDERER

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 240
That he would labour my delivery.

FIRST MURDERER

Why, so he doth, when he delivers you
From this earth's thralldom to the joys of heaven.

SECOND MURDERER

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

CLARENCE

Have you that holy feeling in your souls 245
To counsel me to make my peace with God,
And are you yet to your own souls so blind
That you 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. 250

SECOND MURDERER (*to First*)

What shall we do?

CLARENCE Relent, and save your souls.

FIRST MURDERER

Relent? No. 'Tis cowardly and womanish.

CLARENCE

Not to relent is beastly, savage, devilish.±±
My friend, I spy some pity in thy looks.
O if thine eye be not a flatterer, 255
Come thou on my side, and entreat for me.
A begging prince, what beggar pities not?

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, 260
Would not entreat for life? As you would beg
Were you in my distress±±

SECOND MURDERER Look behind you, my lord!

FIRST MURDERER (*stabbing Clarence*)

Take that, and that! If all this will not serve,
I'll drown you in the malmsey butt within. 265

Exit with Clarence's body

SECOND MURDERER

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

Enter First Murderer

FIRST MURDERER

How now? What mean'st thou, that thou help'st me
not?

By heaven, the Duke shall know how slack you have
been. 270

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.±±
Well, I'll go hide the body in some hole 275
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