

Richard II

1.1

*Enter King Richard and John of Gaunt, with the
Lord Marshal, other nobles, and attendants*

KING RICHARD

Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster,
Hast thou according to thy oath and bond
Brought hither Henry Hereford, thy bold son,
Here to make good the boist'rous late appeal,
Which then our leisure would not let us hear, 5
Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray?

JOHN OF GAUNT I have, my liege.

KING RICHARD

Tell me moreover, hast thou sounded him
If he appeal the Duke on ancient malice
Or worthily, as a good subject should, 10
On some known ground of treachery in him?

JOHN OF GAUNT

As near as I could sift him on that argument,
On some apparent danger seen in him
Aimed at your highness, no inveterate malice.

KING RICHARD

Then call them to our presence.
[Exit one or more]

Face

to face 15

And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
The accuser and the accuseÁd freely speak.
High-stomached are they both and full of ire;
In rage, deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.

*Enter Bolingbroke Duke of Hereford, and Mowbray
Duke of Norfolk*

BOLINGBROKE

Many years of happy days befall 20
My gracious sovereign, my most loving liege!

MOWBRAY

Each day still better others' happiness,
Until the heavens, envying earth's good hap,
Add an immortal title to your crown!

KING RICHARD

We thank you both. Yet one but flatters us, 25
As well appeareth by the cause you come,
Namely, to appeal each other of high treason.
Cousin of Hereford, what dost thou object
Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray?

BOLINGBROKE

First±±heaven be the record to my speech±± 30
In the devotion of a subject's love,
Tend'ring the precious safety of my Prince,
And free from other misbegotten hate,
Come I appellant to this princely presence.
Now, Thomas Mowbray, do I turn to thee; 35
And mark my greeting well, for what I speak
My body shall make good upon this earth,
Or my divine soul answer it in heaven.
Thou art a traitor and a miscreant,
Too good to be so, and too bad to live, 40
Since the more fair and crystal is the sky,
The uglier seem the clouds that in it fly.
Once more, the more to aggravate the note,
With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat,
And wish, so please my sovereign, ere I move 45
What my tongue speaks my right-drawn sword may
prove.

MOWBRAY

Let not my cold words here accuse my zeal.
'Tis not the trial of a woman's war,
The bitter clamour of two eager tongues,
Can arbitrate this cause betwixt us twain. 50
The blood is hot that must be cooled for this.
Yet can I not of such tame patience boast
As to be hushed and naught at all to say.
First, the fair reverence of your highness curbs me
From giving reins and spurs to my free speech, 55
Which else would post until it had returned
These terms of treason doubled down his throat.
Setting aside his high blood's royalty,
And let him be no kinsman to my liege,
I do defy him, and I spit at him, 60

Call him a slanderous coward and a villain;
Which to maintain I would allow him odds,
And meet him, were I tied to run afoot
Even to the frozen ridges of the Alps,
Or any other ground inhabitable, 65
Wherever Englishman durst set his foot.
Meantime let this defend my loyalty:
By all my hopes, most falsely doth he lie.

BOLINGBROKE (*throwing down his gage*)

Pale trembling coward, there I throw my gage,
Disclaiming here the kindred of the King, 70
And lay aside my high blood's royalty,
Which fear, not reverence, makes thee to except.
If guilty dread have left thee so much strength
As to take up mine honour's pawn, then stoop.
By that, and all the rites of knighthood else, 75
Will I make good against thee, arm to arm,
What I have spoke or thou canst worse devise.

MOWBRAY (*taking up the gage*)

I take it up, and by that sword I swear
Which gently laid my knighthood on my shoulder,
I'll answer thee in any fair degree 80
Or chivalrous design of knightly trial;
And when I mount, alive may I not light
If I be traitor or unjustly fight!

KING RICHARD (*to Bolingbroke*)

What doth our cousin lay to Mowbray's charge?
It must be great that can inherit us 85
So much as of a thought of ill in him.

BOLINGBROKE

Look what I speak, my life shall prove it true:
That Mowbray hath received eight thousand nobles
In name of lendings for your highness' soldiers,
The which he hath detained for lewd employments, 90
Like a false traitor and injurious villain.
Besides I say, and will in battle prove,
Or here or elsewhere, to the furthest verge
That ever was surveyed by English eye,
That all the treasons for these eighteen years 95
Complotted and contrived in this land

Fetch from false Mowbray their first head and spring.
Further I say, and further will maintain
Upon his bad life, to make all this good,
That he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death, 100
Suggest his soon-believing adversaries,
And consequently, like a traitor-coward,
Sluced out his innocent soul through streams of blood;
Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth 105
To me for justice and rough chastisement.
And, by the glorious worth of my descent,
This arm shall do it or this life be spent.

KING RICHARD

How high a pitch his resolution soars!
Thomas of Norfolk, what sayst thou to this? 110

MOWBRAY

O, let my sovereign turn away his face,
And bid his ears a little while be deaf,
Till I have told this slander of his blood
How God and good men hate so foul a liar!

KING RICHARD

Mowbray, impartial are our eyes and ears. 115
Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom's heir,
As he is but my father's brother's son,
Now by my sceptre's awe I make a vow
Such neighbour-nearness to our sacred blood
Should nothing privilege him, nor partialize 120
The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.
He is our subject, Mowbray; so art thou.
Free speech and fearless I to thee allow.

MOWBRAY

Then, Bolingbroke, as low as to thy heart
Through the false passage of thy throat thou liest! 125
Three parts of that receipt I had for Calais
Disbursed I duly to his highness' soldiers.
The other part reserved I by consent,
For that my sovereign liege was in my debt
Upon remainder of a dear account 130
Since last I went to France to fetch his queen.
Now swallow down that lie. For Gloucester's death,

I slew him not, but to my own disgrace
Neglected my sworn duty in that case.
For you, my noble lord of Lancaster, 135
The honourable father to my foe,
Once did I lay an ambush for your life,
A trespass that doth vex my grieveÁd soul;
But ere I last received the Sacrament
I did confess it, and exactly begged 140
Your grace's pardon, and I hope I had it.
This is my fault. As for the rest appealed,
It issues from the rancour of a villain,
A recreant and most degenerate traitor,
Which in myself I boldly will defend, 145

He throws down his gage

And interchangeably hurl down my gage
Upon this overweening traitor's foot,
To prove myself a loyal gentleman
Even in the best blood chambered in his bosom;
In haste whereof most heartily I pray 150
Your highness to assign our trial day.

[Bolingbroke takes up the gage]

KING RICHARD

Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be ruled by me.
Let's purge this choler without letting blood.
This we prescribe, though no physician:
Deep malice makes too deep incision; 155
Forget, forgive, conclude, and be agreed;
Our doctors say this is no time to bleed.
Good uncle, let this end where it begun.
We'll calm the Duke of Norfolk, you your son.

JOHN OF GAUNT

To be a make-peace shall become my age. 160
Throw down, my son, the Duke of Norfolk's gage.

KING RICHARD

And, Norfolk, throw down his.

JOHN OF GAUNT When, Harry, when?

Obedience bids I should not bid again.

KING RICHARD

Norfolk, throw down! We bid; there is no boot.

MOWBRAY *(kneeling)*

Myself I throw, dread sovereign, at thy foot. 165
My life thou shalt command, but not my shame.
The one my duty owes, but my fair name,
Despite of death that lives upon my grave,
To dark dishonour's use thou shalt not have.
I am disgraced, impeached, and baffled here, 170
Pierced to the soul with slander's venom'd spear,
The which no balm can cure but his heart blood
Which breathed this poison.

KING RICHARD Rage must be withstood.
Give me his gage. Lions make leopards tame.

MOWBRAY *[standing]*
Yea, but not change his spots. Take but my shame, 175
And I resign my gage. My dear dear lord,
The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation; that away,
Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.
A jewel in a ten-times barred-up chest 180
Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast.
Mine honour is my life. Both grow in one.
Take honour from me, and my life is done.
Then, dear my liege, mine honour let me try.
In that I live, and for that will I die. 185

KING RICHARD
Cousin, throw down your gage. Do you begin.

BOLINGBROKE
O God defend my soul from such deep sin!
Shall I seem crest-fallen in my father's sight?
Or with pale beggar-fear impeach my height
Before this out-dared dastard? Ere my tongue 190
Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong,
Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear
The slavish motive of recanting fear,
And spit it bleeding in his high disgrace
Where shame doth harbour, even in Mowbray's face. 195
[Exit John of Gaunt]

KING RICHARD
We were not born to sue, but to command;
Which since we cannot do to make you friends,
Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,

At Coventry upon Saint Lambert's day.
There shall your swords and lances arbitrate 200
The swelling difference of your settled hate.
Since we cannot atone you, we shall see
Justice design the victor's chivalry.
Lord Marshal, command our officers-at-arms
Be ready to direct these home alarms. 205
Exeunt