

Richard III

4.4

Enter old Queen Margaret

QUEEN MARGARET

So now prosperity begins to mellow
And drop into the rotten mouth of death.
Here in these confines slyly have I lurked
To watch the waning of mine enemies.
A dire induction am I witness to, 5
And will to France, hoping the consequence
Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical.

[Enter the old Duchess of York and Queen Elizabeth]

Withdraw thee, wretched Margaret. Who comes here?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, my poor princes! Ah, my tender babes!
My unblown flowers, new-appearing sweets! 10
If yet your gentle souls fly in the air,
And be not fixed in doom perpetual,
Hover about me with your airy wings
And hear your mother's lamentation.

QUEEN MARGARET *(aside)*

Hover about her, say that right for right 15
Hath dimmed your infant morn to age—Ad night.

DUCHESS OF YORK

So many miseries have crazed my voice
That my woe-wearied tongue is still and mute.
Edward Plantagenet, why art thou dead?

QUEEN MARGARET *(aside)*

Plantagenet doth quit Plantagenet; 20
Edward for Edward pays a dying debt.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs
And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
When didst thou sleep, when such a deed was done?

QUEEN MARGARET *(aside)*

When holy Harry died, and my sweet son. 25

DUCHESS OF YORK

Dead life, blind sight, poor mortal living ghost,

Woe's scene, world's shame, grave's due by life
usurped,
Brief abstract and record of tedious days,
Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,
Unlawfully made drunk with innocents' blood. 30

[They] sit

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah that thou wouldst as soon afford a grave
As thou canst yield a melancholy seat.
Then would I hide my bones, not rest them here.
Ah, who hath any cause to mourn but we?

QUEEN MARGARET *(coming forward)*

If ancient sorrow be most reverend, 35
Give mine the benefit of seniory,
And let my griefs frown on the upper hand.
If sorrow can admit society,
Tell o'er your woes again by viewing mine.
I had an Edward, till a Richard killed him; 40
I had a husband, till a Richard killed him.

(To Elizabeth) Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard
killed him;

Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard killed him.

DUCHESS OF YORK *[rising]*

I had a Richard too, and thou didst kill him;
I had a Rutland too, thou holpst to kill him. 45

QUEEN MARGARET

Thou hadst a Clarence too, and Richard killed him.
From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death:
That dog that had his teeth before his eyes,
To worry lambs and lap their gentle blood; 50
That foul defacer of God's handiwork,
That reigns in galled eyes of weeping souls;
That excellent grand tyrant of the earth
Thy womb let loose to chase us to our graves.
O upright, just, and true-disposing God, 55
How do I thank thee that this charnel cur
Preys on the issue of his mother's body,
And makes her pewfellow with others' moan.

DUCHESS OF YORK

O Harry's wife, triumph not in my woes.
God witness with me, I have wept for thine. 60

QUEEN MARGARET

Bear with me. I am hungry for revenge,
And now I cloy me with beholding it.
Thy Edward, he is dead, that killed my Edward;
Thy other Edward dead, to quite my Edward;
Young York, he is but boot, because both they 65
Matched not the high perfection of my loss;
Thy Clarence, he is dead, that stabbed my Edward,
And the beholders of this frantic play±±
Th'adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Gray±±
Untimely smothered in their dusky graves. 70
Richard yet lives, hell's black intelligencer,
Only reserved their factor to buy souls
And send them thither; but at hand, at hand
Ensues his piteous and unpitied end.
Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray, 75
To have him suddenly conveyed from hence.
Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I plead,
That I may live and say, 'The dog is dead'.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

O thou didst prophesy the time would come
That I should wish for thee to help me curse 80
That bottled spider, that foul bunch-backed toad.

QUEEN MARGARET

I called thee then 'vain flourish of my fortune';
I called thee then, poor shadow, 'painted queen'±±
The presentation of but what I was,
The flattering index of a direful pageant, 85
One heaved a-high to be hurled down below,
A mother only mocked with two fair babes,
A dream of what thou wast, a garish flag
To be the aim of every dangerous shot,
A sign of dignity, a breath, a bubble, 90
A queen in jest, only to fill the scene.
Where is thy husband now? Where be thy brothers?
Where are thy two sons? Wherein dost thou joy?
Who sues, and kneels, and says 'God save the Queen'?
Where be the bending peers that flattered thee? 95

Where be the thronging troops that followed thee?
Decline all this, and see what now thou art:
For happy wife, a most distresseÁd widow;
For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
For queen, a very caitiff, crowned with care; 100
For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
For she that scorned at me, now scorned of me;
For she being feared of all, now fearing one;
For she commanding all, obeyed of none.
Thus hath the course of justice whirled about, 105
And left thee but a very prey to time,
Having no more but thought of what thou wert
To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
Thou didst usurp my place, and dost thou not
Usurp the just proportion of my sorrow? 110
Now thy proud neck bears half my burdened yoke±±
From which, even here, I slip my weary head,
And leave the burden of it all on thee.
Farewell, York's wife, and queen of sad mischance.
These English woes shall make me smile in France. 115

QUEEN ELIZABETH (*rising*)

O thou, well skilled in curses, stay a while,
And teach me how to curse mine enemies.

QUEEN MARGARET

Forbear to sleep the nights, and fast the days;
Compare dead happiness with living woe;
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were, 120
And he that slew them fouler than he is.
Bett'ring thy loss makes the bad causer worse.
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My words are dull. O quicken them with thine!

QUEEN MARGARET

Thy woes will make them sharp and pierce like mine. 125

Exit

DUCHESS OF YORK

Why should calamity be full of words?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Windy attorneys to their client woes,
Airy recorders of intestate joys,

Poor breathing orators of miseries.
Let them have scope. Though what they will impart 130
Help nothing else, yet do they ease the heart.

DUCHESS OF YORK

If so, then be not tongue-tied; go with me,
And in the breath of bitter words let's smother
My damneÁd son, that thy two sweet sons smothered.

A march within

The trumpet sounds. Be copious in exclams. 135

*Enter King Richard and his train [marching with
drummers and trumpeters]*

KING RICHARD

Who intercepts me in my expedition?

DUCHESS OF YORK

O, she that might have intercepted thee,
By strangling thee in her accurseÁd womb,
From all the slaughters, wretch, that thou hast done.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Hid'st thou that forehead with a golden crown, 140
Where should be branded±±if that right were right±±
The slaughter of the prince that owed that crown,
And the dire death of my poor sons and brothers?
Tell me, thou villain-slave, where are my children?

DUCHESS OF YORK

Thou toad, thou toad, where is thy brother Clarence? 145
And little Ned Plantagenet his son?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Where is the gentle Rivers, Vaughan, Gray?

DUCHESS OF YORK Where is kind Hastings?

KING RICHARD *(to his train)*

A flourish, trumpets! Strike alarum, drums!
Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women 150
Rail on the Lord's anointed. Strike, I say!

Flourish. Alarums

(To the women) Either be patient and entreat me fair,

Or with the clamorous report of war

Thus will I drown your exclamations.

DUCHESS OF YORK Art thou my son? 155

KING RICHARD

Ay, I thank God, my father, and yourself.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Then patiently hear my impatience.

KING RICHARD

Madam, I have a touch of your condition,
That cannot brook the accent of reproof.

DUCHESS OF YORK

O let me speak!

KING RICHARD Do, then; but I'll not hear. 160

DUCHESS OF YORK

I will be mild and gentle in my words.

KING RICHARD

And brief, good mother, for I am in haste.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Art thou so hasty? I have stayed for thee,
God knows, in torment and in agony±±

KING RICHARD

And came I not at last to comfort you? 165

DUCHESS OF YORK

No, by the Holy Rood, thou know'st it well.
Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
Thy schooldays frightful, desp'rate, wild, and furious; 170
Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody;
More mild, but yet more harmful; kind in hatred.
What comfortable hour canst thou name
That ever graced me in thy company? 175

KING RICHARD

Faith, none but Humphrey Hewer, that called your
grace

To breakfast once, forth of my company.

If I be so disgracious in your eye,

Let me march on, and not offend you, madam.±±

Strike up the drum.

DUCHESS OF YORK I pray thee, hear me speak. 180

KING RICHARD

You speak too bitterly.

DUCHESS OF YORK Hear me a word,
For I shall never speak to thee again.

KING RICHARD So.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Either thou wilt die by God's just ordinance
Ere from this war thou turn a conqueror, 185
Or I with grief and extreme age shall perish,
And never more behold thy face again.
Therefore take with thee my most heavy curse,
Which in the day of battle tire thee more
Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st. 190
My prayers on the adverse party fight,
And there the little souls of Edward's children
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies,
And promise them success and victory.
Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end; 195
Shame serves thy life, and doth thy death attend.

Exit

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Though far more cause, yet much less spirit to curse
Abides in me; I say `Amen' to all.

KING RICHARD

Stay, madam. I must talk a word with you.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I have no more sons of the royal blood 200
For thee to slaughter. For my daughters, Richard,
They shall be praying nuns, not weeping queens,
And therefore level not to hit their lives.

KING RICHARD

You have a daughter called Elizabeth,
Virtuous and fair, royal and gracious. 205

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And must she die for this? O let her live,
And I'll corrupt her manners, stain her beauty,
Slander myself as false to Edward's bed,
Throw over her the veil of infamy.
So she may live unscarred of bleeding slaughter, 210
I will confess she was not Edward's daughter.

KING RICHARD

Wrong not her birth. She is a royal princess.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To save her life I'll say she is not so.

KING RICHARD

Her life is safest only in her birth.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

And only in that safety died her brothers. 215

KING RICHARD
 Lo, at their births good stars were opposite.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 No, to their lives ill friends were contrary.

KING RICHARD
 All unavoided is the doom of destiny±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 True, when avoided grace makes destiny.
 My babes were destined to a fairer death, 220
 If grace had blessed thee with a fairer life.

KING RICHARD
 Madam, so thrive I in my enterprise
 And dangerous success of bloody wars,
 As I intend more good to you and yours
 Than ever you or yours by me were harmed. 225

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 What good is covered with the face of heaven,
 To be discovered, that can do me good?

KING RICHARD
 Th'advancement of your children, gentle lady.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Up to some scaffold, there to lose their heads.

KING RICHARD
 Unto the dignity and height of fortune, 230
 The high imperial type of this earth's glory.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Flatter my sorrow with report of it.
 Tell me what state, what dignity, what honour,
 Canst thou demise to any child of mine?

KING RICHARD
 Even all I have±±ay, and myself and all, 235
 Will I withal endow a child of thine,
 So in the Lethe of thy angry soul
 Thou drown the sad remembrance of those wrongs,
 Which thou supposest I have done to thee.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Be brief, lest that the process of thy kindness 240
 Last longer telling than thy kindness' date.

KING RICHARD
 Then know that, from my soul, I love thy daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

My daughter's mother thinks that with her soul.

KING RICHARD What do you think?

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 That thou dost love my daughter *from* thy soul; 245
 So *from* thy soul's love didst thou love her brothers,
 And *from* my heart's love I do thank thee for it.

KING RICHARD
 Be not so hasty to confound my meaning.
 I mean, that *with* my soul I love thy daughter,
 And do intend to make her queen of England. 250

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Well then, who dost thou mean shall be her king?

KING RICHARD
 Even he that makes her queen. Who else should be?

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 What, thou?

KING RICHARD Even so. How think you of it?

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 How canst thou woo her?

KING RICHARD That would I learn of you,
 As one being best acquainted with her humour. 255

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 And wilt thou learn of me?

KING RICHARD Madam, with all my heart.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Send to her, by the man that slew her brothers,
 A pair of bleeding hearts; thereon engrave
 `Edward' and `York'; then haply will she weep.
 Therefore present to her±±as sometimes Margaret 260
 Did to thy father, steeped in Rutland's blood±±
 A handkerchief which, say to her, did drain
 The purple sap from her sweet brother's body,
 And bid her wipe her weeping eyes withal.
 If this inducement move her not to love, 265
 Send her a letter of thy noble deeds.
 Tell her thou mad'st away her uncle Clarence,
 Her uncle Rivers±±ay, and for her sake
 Mad'st quick conveyance with her good aunt Anne.

KING RICHARD
 You mock me, madam. This is not the way 270
 To win your daughter.

QUEEN ELIZABETH There is no other way,
 Unless thou couldst put on some other shape,
 And not be Richard, that hath done all this.

KING RICHARD
 Infer fair England's peace by this alliance.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Which she shall purchase with still-lasting war. 275

KING RICHARD
 Tell her the King, that may command, entreats.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 That at her hands which the King's King forbids.

KING RICHARD
 Say she shall be a high and mighty queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 To vail the title, as her mother doth.

KING RICHARD
 Say I will love her everlastingly. 280

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 But how long shall that title `ever' last?

KING RICHARD
 Sweetly in force unto her fair life's end.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 But how long fairly shall her sweet life last?

KING RICHARD
 As long as heaven and nature lengthens it.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 As long as hell and Richard likes of it. 285

KING RICHARD
 Say I, her sovereign, am her subject love.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 But she, your subject, loathes such sovereignty.

KING RICHARD
 Be eloquent in my behalf to her.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 An honest tale speeds best being plainly told.

KING RICHARD
 Then plainly to her tell my loving tale. 290

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 Plain and not honest is too harsh a style.

KING RICHARD
 Your reasons are too shallow and too quick.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
 O no, my reasons are too deep and dead±±

Too deep and dead, poor infants, in their graves.

KING RICHARD
Harp not on that string, madam. That is past. 295

QUEEN ELIZABETH
Harp on it still shall I, till heart-strings break.

KING RICHARD
Now by my George, my garter, and my crown±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH
Profaned, dishonoured, and the third usurped.

KING RICHARD
I swear±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH By nothing, for this is no oath.
Thy George, profaned, hath lost his holy honour; 300
Thy garter, blemished, pawned his lordly virtue;
Thy crown, usurped, disgraced his kingly glory.
If something thou wouldst swear to be believed,
Swear then by something that thou hast not wronged.

KING RICHARD
Then by myself±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH Thy self is self-misused. 305

KING RICHARD
Now by the world±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH 'Tis full of thy foul wrongs.

KING RICHARD
My father's death±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH Thy life hath that dishonoured.

KING RICHARD
Why then, by God±±

QUEEN ELIZABETH God's wrong is most of all.
If thou didst fear to break an oath with him,
The unity the King my husband made 310
Thou hadst not broken, nor my brothers died.
If thou hadst feared to break an oath by him,
Th'imperial metal circling now thy head
Had graced the tender temples of my child,
And both the princes had been breathing here, 315
Which now±±two tender bedfellows for dust±±
Thy broken faith hath made the prey for worms.
What canst thou swear by now?

KING RICHARD The time to come.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

That thou hast wrongeÁd in the time o'erpast,
For I myself have many tears to wash 320
Hereafter time, for time past wronged by thee.
The children live, whose fathers thou hast
slaughtered±±
Ungoverned youth, to wail it in their age.
The parents live, whose children thou hast
butchered±±
Old barren plants, to wail it with their age. 325
Swear not by time to come, for that thou hast
Misused ere used, by times ill-used o'erpast.

KING RICHARD

As I intend to prosper and repent,
So thrive I in my dangerous affairs
Of hostile arms±±myself myself confound, 330
Heaven and fortune bar me happy hours,
Day yield me not thy light nor night thy rest;
Be opposite, all planets of good luck,
To my proceeding±±if, with dear heart's love,
Immaculate devotion, holy thoughts, 335
I tender not thy beauteous, princely daughter.
In her consists my happiness and thine.
Without her follows±±to myself and thee,
Herself, the land, and many a Christian soul±±
Death, desolation, ruin, and decay. 340
It cannot be avoided but by this;
It will not be avoided but by this.
Therefore, good-mother±±I must call you so±±
Be the attorney of my love to her.
Plead what I will be, not what I have been; 345
Not my deserts, but what I will deserve.
Urge the necessity and state of times,
And be not peevish-fond in great designs.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I be tempted of the devil thus?

KING RICHARD

Ay, if the devil tempt you to do good. 350

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I forget myself to be myself?

KING RICHARD

Ay, if yourself's remembrance wrong yourself.
QUEEN ELIZABETH Yet thou didst kill my children.

KING RICHARD

But in your daughter's womb I bury them,
Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed 355
Selves of themselves, to your recomfiture.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?

KING RICHARD

And be a happy mother by the deed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

I go. Write to me very shortly,
And you shall understand from me her mind. 360

KING RICHARD

Bear her my true love's kiss,
He kisses her

and so

farewell±±

Exit Elizabeth

Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman.

Enter Sir Richard Ratcliffe

How now, what news?

RATCLIFFE

Most mighty sovereign, on the western coast
Rideth a puissant navy. To our shores 365
Throng many doubtful, hollow-hearted friends,
Unarmed and unresolved, to beat them back.
'Tis thought that Richmond is their admiral,
And there they hull, expecting but the aid
Of Buckingham to welcome them ashore. 370

KING RICHARD

Some light-foot friend post to the Duke of Norfolk.
Ratcliffe thyself, or Catesby±±where is he?

CATESBY

Here, my good lord.

KING RICHARD Catesby, fly to the Duke.

CATESBY

I will, my lord, with all convenient haste.

KING RICHARD

Ratcliffe, come hither. Post to Salisbury; 375
When thou com'st thither±± *(to Catesby)* dull,

unmindful villain,
Why stay'st thou here, and goest not to the Duke?
CATESBY
First, mighty liege, tell me your highness' pleasure:
What from your grace I shall deliver to him?
KING RICHARD
O true, good Catesby. Bid him levy straight 380
The greatest strength and power that he can make,
And meet me suddenly at Salisbury.

CATESBY I go.
Exit

RATCLIFFE
What, may it please you, shall I do at Salisbury?

KING RICHARD
Why, what wouldst thou do there before I go? 385

RATCLIFFE
Your highness told me I should post before.

KING RICHARD
My mind is changed.
Enter Lord Stanley

Stanley, what news with you?

STANLEY
None, good my liege, to please you with the hearing,
Nor none so bad but well may be reported.

KING RICHARD
Hoyday, a riddle! Neither good nor bad. 390
Why need'st thou run so many mile about
When thou mayst tell thy tale the nearest way?
Once more, what news?

STANLEY Richmond is on the seas.

KING RICHARD
There let him sink, and be the seas on him.
White-livered renegade, what doth he there? 395

STANLEY
I know not, mighty sovereign, but by guess.

KING RICHARD Well, as you guess?

STANLEY
Stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham, and Ely,
He makes for England, here to claim the crown.

KING RICHARD
Is the chair empty? Is the sword unswayed? 400

Is the King dead? The empire unpossessed?
What heir of York is there alive but we?
And who is England's king but great York's heir?
Then tell me, what makes he upon the seas?

STANLEY

Unless for that, my liege, I cannot guess. 405

KING RICHARD

Unless for that he comes to be your liege,
You cannot guess wherefore the Welshman comes.
Thou wilt revolt and fly to him, I fear.

STANLEY

No, my good lord, therefore mistrust me not.

KING RICHARD

Where is thy power then? To beat him back, 410
Where be thy tenants and thy followers?
Are they not now upon the western shore,
Safe-conducting the rebels from their ships?

STANLEY

No, my good lord, my friends are in the north.

KING RICHARD

Cold friends to me. What do they in the north, 415
When they should serve their sovereign in the west?

STANLEY

They have not been commanded, mighty King.
Pleaseth your majesty to give me leave,
I'll muster up my friends and meet your grace
Where and what time your majesty shall please. 420

KING RICHARD

Ay, ay, thou wouldst be gone to join with Richmond.
But I'll not trust thee.

STANLEY

Most mighty sovereign,
You have no cause to hold my friendship doubtful.
I never was, nor never will be, false.

KING RICHARD

Go then and muster men±±but leave behind 425
Your son George Stanley. Look your heart be firm,
Or else his head's assurance is but frail.

STANLEY

So deal with him as I prove true to you.

Exit

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER

My gracious sovereign, now in Devonshire,
As I by friends am well advertiseÁd, 430
Sir Edward Courtenay and the haughty prelate,
Bishop of Exeter, his elder brother,
With many more confederates are in arms.

Enter another Messenger

SECOND MESSENGER

In Kent, my liege, the Guildfords are in arms,
And every hour more competitors 435
Flock to the rebels, and their power grows strong.

Enter another Messenger

THIRD MESSENGER

My lord, the army of great Buckingham±±

KING RICHARD

Out on ye, owls! Nothing but songs of death?

He striketh him

There, take thou that, till thou bring better news.

THIRD MESSENGER

The news I have to tell your majesty 440
Is that, by sudden flood and fall of water,
Buckingham's army is dispersed and scattered,
And he himself wandered away alone,
No man knows whither.

KING RICHARD I cry thee mercy.±±

Ratcliffe, reward him for the blow I gave him.±± 445

Hath any well-adviseÁd friend proclaimed

Reward to him that brings the traitor in?

THIRD MESSENGER

Such proclamation hath been made, my lord.

Enter another Messenger

FOURTH MESSENGER

Sir Thomas Lovell and Lord Marquis Dorset±±
'Tis said, my liege±±in Yorkshire are in arms. 450
But this good comfort bring I to your highness:
The Breton navy is dispersed by tempest.
Richmond in Dorsetshire sent out a boat
Unto the shore, to ask those on the banks
If they were his assistants, yea or no? 455
Who answered him they came from Buckingham
Upon his party. He, mistrusting them,

Hoist sail and made his course again for Bretagne.

KING RICHARD

March on, march on, since we are up in arms,
If not to fight with foreign enemies, 460
Yet to beat down these rebels here at home.

Enter Catesby

CATESBY

My liege, the Duke of Buckingham is taken.
That is the best news. That the Earl of Richmond
Is with a mighty power landed at Milford
Is colder tidings, yet they must be told. 465

KING RICHARD

Away, towards Salisbury! While we reason here,
A royal battle might be won and lost.
Someone take order Buckingham be brought
To Salisbury. The rest march on with me.

Flourish. Exeunt