

Richard Duke of York

5.4

Flourish. March. Enter Queen Margaret, Prince Edward, the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Oxford, and soldiers

QUEEN MARGARET

Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.
What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding-anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood? 5
Yet lives our pilot still. Is't meet that he
Should leave the helm and, like a fearful lad,
With tearful eyes add water to the sea,
And give more strength to that which hath too much,
Whiles, in his moan, the ship splits on the rock 10
Which industry and courage might have saved?
Ah, what a shame; ah, what a fault were this.
Say Warwick was our anchor±±what of that?
And Montague our top-mast±±what of him?
Our slaughtered friends the tackles±±what of these? 15
Why, is not Oxford here another anchor?
And Somerset another goodly mast?
The friends of France our shrouds and tacklings?
And, though unskilful, why not Ned and I
For once allowed the skilful pilot's charge? 20
We will not from the helm to sit and weep,
But keep our course, though the rough wind say no,
From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wreck.
As good to chide the waves as speak them fair.
And what is Edward but a ruthless sea? 25
What Clarence but a quicksand of deceit?
And Richard but a raggeÁd fatal rock?
All these the enemies to our poor barque.
Say you can swim±±alas, 'tis but a while;
Tread on the sand±±why, there you quickly sink; 30
Bestride the rock±±the tide will wash you off,
Or else you famish. That's a threefold death.

This speak I, lords, to let you understand,
If case some one of you would fly from us,
That there's no hoped-for mercy with the brothers York 35
More than with ruthless waves, with sands, and rocks.
Why, courage then±±what cannot be avoided
'Twere childish weakness to lament or fear.

PRINCE EDWARD

Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit
Should, if a coward heard her speak these words, 40
Infuse his breast with magnanimity
And make him, naked, foil a man at arms.
I speak not this as doubting any here±±
For did I but suspect a fearful man,
He should have leave to go away betimes, 45
Lest in our need he might infect another
And make him of like spirit to himself.
If any such be here±±as God forbid±±
Let him depart before we need his help.

OXFORD

Women and children of so high a courage, 50
And warriors faint±±why, 'twere perpetual shame!
O brave young Prince, thy famous grandfather
Doth live again in thee! Long mayst thou live
To bear his image and renew his glories!

SOMERSET

And he that will not fight for such a hope, 55
Go home to bed, and like the owl by day,
If he arise, be mocked and wondered at.

QUEEN MARGARET

Thanks, gentle Somerset; sweet Oxford, thanks.

PRINCE EDWARD

And take his thanks that yet hath nothing else.

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER

Prepare you, lords, for Edward is at hand 60
Ready to fight±±therefore be resolute.

OXFORD

I thought no less. It is his policy
To haste thus fast to find us unprovided.

SOMERSET

But he's deceived; we are in readiness.

QUEEN MARGARET

This cheers my heart, to see your forwardness.

65

OXFORD

Here pitch our battle±±hence we will not budge.

*Flourish and march. Enter King Edward, Richard
Duke of Gloucester, and George Duke of Clarence,
with soldiers*

KING EDWARD *(to his followers)*

Brave followers, yonder stands the thorny wood
Which, by the heavens' assistance and your strength,
Must by the roots be hewn up yet ere night.

I need not add more fuel to your fire, 70

For well I wot ye blaze to burn them out.

Give signal to the fight, and to it, lords.

QUEEN MARGARET *(to her followers)*

Lords, knights, and gentlemen±±what I should say
My tears gainsay; for every word I speak

Ye see I drink the water of my eye. 75

Therefore, no more but this: Henry your sovereign

Is prisoner to the foe, his state usurped,

His realm a slaughter-house, his subjects slain,

His statutes cancelled, and his treasure spent±±

And yonder is the wolf that makes this spoil. 80

You fight in justice; then in God's name, lords,

Be valiant, and give signal to the fight.

Alarum, retreat, excursions. Exeunt