

The First Part of the Contention

1.4

Enter Margery Jordan, a witch; Sir John Hume and John Southwell, two priests; and Roger Bolingbroke, a conjuror

HUME Come, my masters, the Duchess, I tell you, expects performance of your promises.

BOLINGBROKE Master Hume, we are therefore provided. Will her ladyship behold and hear our exorcisms?

HUME Ay, what else? Fear you not her courage. 5

BOLINGBROKE I have heard her reported to be a woman of an invincible spirit. But it shall be convenient, Master Hume, that you be by her, aloft, while we be busy below. And so, I pray you, go in God's name and leave us. 10

Exit Hume

Mother Jordan, be you prostrate and grovel on the earth.

She lies down upon her face.

[Enter Eleanor, the Duchess of Gloucester, aloft]

John Southwell, read you and let us to our work.

DUCHESS Well said, my masters, and welcome all. To this gear the sooner the better. 15

[Enter Hume aloft]

BOLINGBROKE

Patience, good lady±±wizards know their times.
Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,
The time of night when Troy was set on fire,
The time when screech-owls cry and bandogs howl,
And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves±± 20
That time best fits the work we have in hand.
Madam, sit you, and fear not. Whom we raise
We will make fast within a hallowed verge.

Here do the ceremonies belonging, and make the circle. Southwell reads 'Coniuro te', &c. It thunders and lightens terribly, then the spirit Asnath riseth

ASNATH Adsum.

WITCH Asnath, 25

By the eternal God whose name and power
Thou tremblest at, answer that I shall ask,
For till thou speak, thou shalt not pass from hence.

ASNATH

Ask what thou wilt, that I had said and done.

BOLINGBROKE (*reads*)

'First, of the King: what shall of him become?' 30

ASNATH

The Duke yet lives that Henry shall depose,
But him outlive, and die a violent death.

As the spirit speaks, [Southwell] writes the answer

BOLINGBROKE (*reads*)

'Tell me what fate awaits the Duke of Suffolk.'

ASNATH

By water shall he die, and take his end.

BOLINGBROKE (*reads*)

'What shall betide the Duke of Somerset?' 35

ASNATH

Let him shun castles. Safer shall he be
Upon the sandy plains than where castles mounted
stand.

Have done±±for more I hardly can endure.

BOLINGBROKE

Descend to darkness and the burning lake!

False fiend, avoid! 40

*Thunder and lightning. The spirit sinks down
again*

*Enter, breaking in, the Dukes of York and
Buckingham with their guard, among them Sir
Humphrey Stafford*

YORK

Lay hands upon these traitors and their trash.

*[Bolingbroke, Southwell, and Jordan are taken
prisoner. Buckingham takes the writings from
Bolingbroke and Southwell]*

(*To Jordan*) Beldam, I think we watched you at an inch.

(*To the Duchess*) What, madam, are you there? The
King and common weal

Are deep indebted for this piece of pains.

My lord Protector will, I doubt it not, 45

See you well guerdoned for these good deserts.

DUCHESS

Not half so bad as thine to England's king,
Injurious Duke, that threatest where's no cause.

BUCKINGHAM

True, madam, none at all±±

[He raises the writings]

what

call you this?

(To his men) Away with them. Let them be clapped up
close 50

And kept asunder. *(To the Duchess)* You, madam, shall
with us.

Stafford, take her to thee.

Exeunt Stafford [and others] to the Duchess

[and Hume] above

We'll see your trinkets here all forthcoming.

All away!

*Exeunt below Jordan, Southwell, and
Bolingbroke, guarded, and, above, [Hume and]
the Duchess guarded by Stafford [and others.
York and Buckingham remain]*

YORK

Lord Buckingham, methinks you watched her well.

55

A pretty plot, well chosen to build upon.

Now pray, my lord, let's see the devil's writ.

[Buckingham gives him the writings]

What have we here?

He reads the writings

Why, this is just

Aio Aeacidam, Romanos vincere posse.

These oracles are hardly attained 60

And hardly understood. Come, come, my lord,

The King is now in progress towards Saint Albans;

With him the husband of this lovely lady.

Thither goes these news as fast as horse can carry
them±±

A sorry breakfast for my lord Protector. 65

BUCKINGHAM

Your grace shall give me leave, my lord of York,
To be the post in hope of his reward.

YORK *(returning the writings to Buckingham)*

At your pleasure, my good lord.

[Exit Buckingham]

(Calling within)

Who's within there, ho!

Enter a servingman

Invite my lords of Salisbury and Warwick

To sup with me tomorrow night. Away.

Exeunt severally