

# 1 Henry VI

## 2.5

*Enter Edmund Mortimer, brought in a chair [by] his  
Keepers*

### MORTIMER

Kind keepers of my weak decaying age,  
Let dying Mortimer here rest himself.  
Even like a man new-haleÁd from the rack,  
So fare my limbs with long imprisonment;  
And these grey locks, the pursuivants of death, 5  
Argue the end of Edmund Mortimer,  
Nestor-like ageÁd in an age of care.  
These eyes, like lamps whose wasting oil is spent,  
Wax dim, as drawing to their exigent;  
Weak shoulders, overborne with burdening grief, 10  
And pithless arms, like to a withered vine  
That droops his sapless branches to the ground.  
Yet are these feet±±whose strengthless stay is numb,  
Unable to support this lump of clay±±  
Swift-wingeÁd with desire to get a grave, 15  
As witting I no other comfort have.  
But tell me, keeper, will my nephew come?

### KEEPER

Richard Plantagenet, my lord, will come.  
We sent unto the Temple, unto his chamber,  
And answer was returned that he will come. 20

### MORTIMER

Enough. My soul shall then be satisfied.  
Poor gentleman, his wrong doth equal mine.  
Since Henry Monmouth first began to reign±±  
Before whose glory I was great in arms±±  
This loathsome sequestration have I had; 25  
And even since then hath Richard been obscured,  
Deprived of honour and inheritance.  
But now the arbitrator of despairs,  
Just Death, kind umpire of men's miseries,  
With sweet enlargement doth dismiss me hence. 30  
I would his troubles likewise were expired,

That so he might recover what was lost.

*Enter Richard Plantagenet*

**KEEPER**

My lord, your loving nephew now is come.

**MORTIMER**

Richard Plantagenet, my friend, is he come?

**RICHARD PLANTAGENET**

Ay, noble uncle, thus ignobly used: 35

Your nephew, late despised—Richard, comes.

**MORTIMER** *(to Keepers)*

Direct mine arms I may embrace his neck

And in his bosom spend my latter gasp.

O tell me when my lips do touch his cheeks,

That I may kindly give one fainting kiss. 40

*He embraces Richard*

And now declare, sweet stem from York's great stock,

Why didst thou say of late thou wert despised?

**RICHARD PLANTAGENET**

First lean thine age—back against mine arm,

And in that ease I'll tell thee my dis-ease.

This day in argument upon a case 45

Some words there grew 'twixt Somerset and me;

Among which terms he used his lavish tongue

And did upbraid me with my father's death;

Which obloquy set bars before my tongue,

Else with the like I had requited him. 50

Therefore, good uncle, for my father's sake,

In honour of a true Plantagenet,

And for alliance' sake, declare the cause

My father, Earl of Cambridge, lost his head.

**MORTIMER**

That cause, fair nephew, that imprisoned me, 55

And hath detained me all my flow'ring youth

Within a loathsome dungeon, there to pine,

Was curse—and instrument of his decease.

**RICHARD PLANTAGENET**

Discover more at large what cause that was,

For I am ignorant and cannot guess. 60

**MORTIMER**

I will, if that my fading breath permit

And death approach not ere my tale be done.

Henry the Fourth, grandfather to this King,  
 Deposed his nephew Richard, Edward's son,  
 The first begotten and the lawful heir 65  
 Of Edward king, the third of that descent;  
 During whose reign the Percies of the north,  
 Finding his usurpation most unjust,  
 Endeavoured my advancement to the throne.  
 The reason moved these warlike lords to this 70  
 Was for that±±young King Richard thus removed,  
 Leaving no heir begotten of his body±±  
 I was the next by birth and parentage,  
 For by my mother I deriveÁd am  
 From Lionel Duke of Clarence, the third son 75  
 To King Edward the Third±±whereas the King  
 From John of Gaunt doth bring his pedigree,  
 Being but fourth of that heroic line.  
 But mark: as in this haughty great attempt  
 They laboureÁd to plant the rightful heir, 80  
 I lost my liberty, and they their lives.  
 Long after this, when Henry the Fifth,  
 Succeeding his father Bolingbroke, did reign,  
 Thy father, Earl of Cambridge then, derived  
 From famous Edmund Langley, Duke of York, 85  
 Marrying my sister that thy mother was,  
 Again, in pity of my hard distress,  
 Levied an army, weening to redeem  
 And have installed me in the diadem;  
 But, as the rest, so fell that noble earl, 90  
 And was beheaded. Thus the Mortimers,  
 In whom the title rested, were suppressed.

**RICHARD PLANTAGENET**

Of which, my lord, your honour is the last.

**MORTIMER**

True, and thou seest that I no issue have,  
 And that my fainting words do warrant death. 95  
 Thou art my heir. The rest I wish thee gather±±  
 But yet be wary in thy studious care.

**RICHARD PLANTAGENET**

Thy grave admonishments prevail with me.  
 But yet methinks my father's execution

Was nothing less than bloody tyranny.	100
<b>MORTIMER</b>	
With silence, nephew, be thou politic.	
Strong-fixeÁd is the house of Lancaster,	
And like a mountain, not to be removed.	
But now thy uncle is removing hence,	
As princes do their courts, when they are cloyed	105
With long continuance in a settled place.	
<b>RICHARD PLANTAGENET</b>	
O uncle, would some part of my young years	
Might but redeem the passage of your age.	
<b>MORTIMER</b>	
Thou dost then wrong me, as that slaughterer doth	
Which giveth many wounds when one will kill.	110
Mourn not, except thou sorrow for my good.	
Only give order for my funeral.	
And so farewell, and fair be all thy hopes,	
And prosperous be thy life in peace and war.	
<i>Dies</i>	
<b>RICHARD PLANTAGENET</b>	
And peace, no war, befall thy parting soul.	115
In prison hast thou spent a pilgrimage,	
And like a hermit overpassed thy days.	
Well, I will lock his counsel in my breast,	
And what I do imagine, let that rest.	
Keepers, convey him hence, and I myself	120
Will see his burial better than his life.	
<i>Exeunt Keepers with Mortimer's body</i>	
Here dies the dusky torch of Mortimer,	
Choked with ambition of the meaner sort.	
And for those wrongs, those bitter injuries,	
Which Somerset hath offered to my house,	125
I doubt not but with honour to redress.	
And therefore haste I to the Parliament,	
Either to be restoreÁd to my blood,	
Or make mine ill th'advantage of my good.	
<i>Exit</i>	