

Richard Duke of York

2.3

Alarum. Excursions. Enter the Earl of Warwick

WARWICK

Forespent with toil, as runners with a race,
I lay me down a little while to breathe;
For strokes received, and many blows repaid,
Have robbed my strong-knit sinews of their strength,
And, spite of spite, needs must I rest a while. 5

Enter Edward, the Duke of York, running

EDWARD

Smile, gentle heaven, or strike, ungentle death!
For this world frowns, and Edward's sun is clouded.

WARWICK

How now, my lord, what hap? What hope of good?
Enter George, [running]

GEORGE

Our hap is loss, our hope but sad despair;
Our ranks are broke, and ruin follows us. 10
What counsel give you? Whither shall we fly?

EDWARD

Bootless is flight±±they follow us with wings,
And weak we are, and cannot shun pursuit.
Enter Richard, [running]

RICHARD

Ah, Warwick, why hast thou withdrawn thyself?
Thy brother's blood the thirsty earth hath drunk, 15
Broached with the steely point of Clifford's lance.
And in the very pangs of death he cried,
Like to a dismal clangour heard from far,
`Warwick, revenge±±brother, revenge my death!'
So, underneath the belly of their steeds 20
That stained their fetlocks in his smoking blood,
The noble gentleman gave up the ghost.

WARWICK

Then let the earth be drunken with our blood.
I'll kill my horse, because I will not fly.
Why stand we like soft-hearted women here, 25
Wailing our losses, whiles the foe doth rage;

And look upon, as if the tragedy
Were played in jest by counterfeiting actors?
(*Kneeling*) Here, on my knee, I vow to God above
I'll never pause again, never stand still, 30
Till either death hath closed these eyes of mine
Or fortune given me measure of revenge.

EDWARD (*kneeling*)

O, Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine,
And in this vow do chain my soul to thine.
And, ere my knee rise from the earth's cold face, 35
I throw my hands, mine eyes, my heart to Thee,
Thou setter up and plucker down of kings,
Beseeching Thee, if with Thy will it stands
That to my foes this body must be prey,
Yet that Thy brazen gates of heaven may ope 40
And give sweet passage to my sinful soul.

[They rise]

Now, lords, take leave until we meet again,
Where'er it be, in heaven or in earth.

RICHARD

Brother, give me thy hand; and, gentle Warwick,
Let me embrace thee in my weary arms. 45
I, that did never weep, now melt with woe
That winter should cut off our springtime so.

WARWICK

Away, away! Once more, sweet lords, farewell.

GEORGE

Yet let us all together to our troops,
And give them leave to fly that will not stay; 50
And call them pillars that will stand to us;
And, if we thrive, promise them such rewards
As victors wear at the Olympian games.
This may plant courage in their quailing breasts,
For yet is hope of life and victory. 55
Forslow no longer±±make we hence amain.

Exeunt