

Richard III

3.4

Enter the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Stanley Earl of Derby, Lord Hastings, Bishop of Ely, the Duke of Norfolk, [Sir William Catesby], with others at a table

LORD HASTINGS

Now, noble peers, the cause why we are met
Is to determine of the coronation.

In God's name, speak: when is the royal day?

BUCKINGHAM

Is all things ready for that solemn time?

STANLEY

It is, and wants but nomination.

5

BISHOP OF ELY

Tomorrow, then, I judge a happy day.

BUCKINGHAM

Who knows the Lord Protector's mind herein?

Who is most inward with the noble Duke?

BISHOP OF ELY

Your grace, methinks, should soonest know his mind.

BUCKINGHAM

We know each other's faces. For our hearts,

10

He knows no more of mine than I of yours,

Or I of his, my lord, than you of mine.±±

Lord Hastings, you and he are near in love.

LORD HASTINGS

I thank his grace; I know he loves me well.

But for his purpose in the coronation,

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I have not sounded him, nor he delivered

His gracious pleasure any way therein.

But you, my honourable lords, may name the time,

And in the Duke's behalf I'll give my voice,

Which I presume he'll take in gentle part.

20

Enter Richard Duke of Gloucester

BISHOP OF ELY

In happy time, here comes the Duke himself.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

My noble lords, and cousins all, good morrow.

I have been long a sleeper, but I trust

My absence doth neglect no great design
Which by my presence might have been concluded. 25

BUCKINGHAM

Had not you come upon your cue, my lord,
William Lord Hastings had pronounced your part±±
I mean, your voice, for crowning of the King.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Than my Lord Hastings no man might be bolder.
His lordship knows me well, and loves me well.±± 30
My lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn
I saw good strawberries in your garden there.
I do beseech you send for some of them.

BISHOP OF ELY

Marry, and will, my lord, with all my heart.

Exit

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Cousin of Buckingham, a word with you. 35
(*Aside*) Catesby hath sounded Hastings in our business,
And finds the testy gentleman so hot
That he will lose his head ere give consent
His `master's child'±±as worshipful he terms it±±
Shall lose the royalty of England's throne. 40

BUCKINGHAM

Withdraw yourself a while; I'll go with you.

Exeunt Richard [and Buckingham]

STANLEY

We have not yet set down this day of triumph.
Tomorrow, in my judgement, is too sudden,
For I myself am not so well provided
As else I would be, were the day prolonged. 45

Enter Bishop of Ely

BISHOP OF ELY

Where is my lord, the Duke of Gloucester?
I have sent for these strawberries.

LORD HASTINGS

His grace looks cheerfully and smooth this morning.
There's some conceit or other likes him well,
When that he bids good morrow with such spirit. 50
I think there's never a man in Christendom
Can lesser hide his love or hate than he,
For by his face straight shall you know his heart.

STANLEY

What of his heart perceive you in his face
By any likelihood he showed today? 55

LORD HASTINGS

Marry, that with no man here he is offended±±
For were he, he had shown it in his looks.

STANLEY I pray God he be not.

Enter Richard [and Buckingham]

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
That do conspire my death with devilish plots 60
Of damneÁd witchcraft, and that have prevailed
Upon my body with their hellish charms?

LORD HASTINGS

The tender love I bear your grace, my lord,
Makes me most forward in this princely presence
To doom th'offenders, whatsoe'er they be. 65
I say, my lord, they have deserveÁd death.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Then be your eyes the witness of their evil:
See how I am bewitched. Behold, mine arm
Is like a blasted sapling withered up.
And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch, 70
Consorted with that harlot, strumpet Shore,
That by their witchcraft thus have markeÁd me.

LORD HASTINGS

If they have done this deed, my noble lord±±

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

`If'? Thou protector of this damneÁd strumpet,
Talk'st thou to me of `ifs'? Thou art a traitor.±± 75
Off with his head. Now, by Saint Paul I swear,
I will not dine until I see the same.
Some see it done.

The rest that love me, rise and follow me.

Exeunt all but [Catesby] and Hastings

LORD HASTINGS

Woe, woe for England! Not a whit for me, 80
For I, too fond, might have prevented this.
Stanley did dream the boar did raze our helms,
But I did scorn it and disdain to fly.
Three times today my footcloth horse did stumble,

And started when he looked upon the Tower, 85
As loath to bear me to the slaughterhouse.
O now I need the priest that spake to me.
I now repent I told the pursuivant,
As too triumphing, how mine enemies
Today at Pomfret bloodily were butchered, 90
And I myself secure in grace and favour.
O Margaret, Margaret! Now thy heavy curse
Is lighted on poor Hastings' wretched head.

[CATESBY]

Come, come, dispatch: the Duke would be at dinner.
Make a short shrift; he longs to see your head. 95

LORD HASTINGS

O momentary grace of mortal men,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God.
Who builds his hope in th'air of your good looks
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready with every nod to tumble down 100
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.

[CATESBY]

Come, come, dispatch. 'Tis bootless to exclaim.

LORD HASTINGS

O bloody Richard! Miserable England!
I prophesy the fearful'st time to thee
That ever wretched age hath looked upon.±± 105
Come lead me to the block; bear him my head.
They smile at me, who shortly shall be dead.

Exeunt