

Richard Duke of York

2.2

[York's head is thrust out, above.]

Flourish. Enter King Henry, Queen Margaret, Lord Clifford, the Earl of Northumberland, and young Prince Edward, with a drummer and trumpeters

QUEEN MARGARET

Welcome, my lord, to this brave town of York.
Yonder's the head of that arch-enemy
That sought to be encompassed with your crown.
Doth not the object cheer your heart, my lord?

KING HENRY

Ay, as the rocks cheer them that fear their wreck. 5
To see this sight, it irks my very soul.
Withhold revenge, dear God±±'tis not my fault,
Nor wittingly have I infringed my vow.

CLIFFORD

My gracious liege, this too much lenity
And harmful pity must be laid aside. 10
To whom do lions cast their gentle looks?
Not to the beast that would usurp their den.
Whose hand is that the forest bear doth lick?
Not his that spoils her young before her face.
Who scapes the lurking serpent's mortal sting? 15
Not he that sets his foot upon her back.
The smallest worm will turn, being trodden on,
And doves will peck in safeguard of their brood.
Ambitious York did level at thy crown,
Thou smiling while he knit his angry brows. 20
He, but a duke, would have his son a king,
And raise his issue like a loving sire;
Thou, being a king, blest with a goodly son,
Didst yield consent to disinherit him,
Which argued thee a most unloving father. 25
Unreasonable creatures feed their young,
And though man's face be fearful to their eyes,
Yet, in protection of their tender ones,
Who hath not seen them, even with those wings

Which sometime they have used with fearful flight, 30
Make war with him that climbed unto their nest,
Offering their own lives in their young's defence?
For shame, my liege, make them your precedent!
Were it not pity that this goodly boy
Should lose his birthright by his father's fault, 35
And long hereafter say unto his child
'What my great-grandfather and grandsire got
My careless father fondly gave away'?
Ah, what a shame were this! Look on the boy,
And let his manly face, which promiseth 40
Successful fortune, steel thy melting heart
To hold thine own and leave thine own with him.

KING HENRY

Full well hath Clifford played the orator,
Inferring arguments of mighty force.
But, Clifford, tell me±±didst thou never hear 45
That things ill got had ever bad success?
And happy always was it for that son
Whose father for his hoarding went to hell?
I'll leave my son my virtuous deeds behind,
And would my father had left me no more. 50
For all the rest is held at such a rate
As brings a thousandfold more care to keep
Than in possession any jot of pleasure.
Ah, cousin York, would thy best friends did know
How it doth grieve me that thy head is here. 55

QUEEN MARGARET

My lord, cheer up your spirits±±our foes are nigh,
And this soft courage makes your followers faint.
You promised knighthood to our forward son.
Unsheathe your sword and dub him presently.
Edward, kneel down. 60

Prince Edward kneels

KING HENRY

Edward Plantagenet, arise a knight±±
And learn this lesson: draw thy sword in right.

PRINCE EDWARD (*rising*)

My gracious father, by your kingly leave,
I'll draw it as apparent to the crown,

And in that quarrel use it to the death. 65

CLIFFORD
 Why, that is spoken like a toward prince.
Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER
 Royal commanders, be in readiness±±
 For with a band of thirty thousand men
 Comes Warwick backing of the Duke of York;
 And in the towns, as they do march along, 70
 Proclaims him king, and many fly to him.
 Darraign your battle, for they are at hand.

CLIFFORD *(to King Henry)*
 I would your highness would depart the field±±
 The Queen hath best success when you are absent.

QUEEN MARGARET *(to King Henry)*
 Ay, good my lord, and leave us to our fortune. 75

KING HENRY
 Why, that's my fortune too±±therefore I'll stay.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 Be it with resolution then to fight.

PRINCE EDWARD *(to King Henry)*
 My royal father, cheer these noble lords
 And hearten those that fight in your defence.
 Unsheathe your sword, good father; cry `Saint George!' 80
*March. Enter Edward Duke of York, the Earl of
 Warwick, Richard, George, the Duke of Norfolk, the
 Marquis of Montague, and soldiers*

EDWARD
 Now, perjured Henry, wilt thou kneel for grace,
 And set thy diadem upon my head±±
 Or bide the mortal fortune of the field?

QUEEN MARGARET
 Go rate thy minions, proud insulting boy!
 Becomes it thee to be thus bold in terms 85
 Before thy sovereign and thy lawful king?

EDWARD
 I am his king, and he should bow his knee.
 I was adopted heir by his consent.

GEORGE *(to Queen Margaret)*
 Since when his oath is broke±±for, as I hear,
 You that are king, though he do wear the crown, 90

Have caused him by new act of Parliament
 To blot our brother out, and put his own son in.

CLIFFORD And reason too±±
 Who should succeed the father but the son?

RICHARD
 Are you there, butcher? O, I cannot speak! 95

CLIFFORD
 Ay, crookback, here I stand to answer thee,
 Or any he the proudest of thy sort.

RICHARD
 'Twas you that killed young Rutland, was it not?

CLIFFORD
 Ay, and old York, and yet not satisfied.

RICHARD
 For God's sake, lords, give signal to the fight. 100

WARWICK
 What sayst thou, Henry, wilt thou yield the crown?

QUEEN MARGARET
 Why, how now, long-tongued Warwick, dare you
 speak?
 When you and I met at Saint Albans last,
 Your legs did better service than your hands.

WARWICK
 Then 'twas my turn to fly±±and now 'tis thine. 105

CLIFFORD
 You said so much before, and yet you fled.

WARWICK
 'Twas not your valour, Clifford, drove me thence.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 No, nor your manhood that durst make you stay.

RICHARD
 Northumberland, I hold thee reverently.
 Break off the parley, for scarce I can refrain 110
 The execution of my big-swoll'n heart
 Upon that Clifford, that cruel child-killer.

CLIFFORD
 I slew thy father±±call'st thou him a child?

RICHARD
 Ay, like a dastard and a treacherous coward,
 As thou didst kill our tender brother Rutland. 115
 But ere sun set I'll make thee curse the deed.

KING HENRY

Have done with words, my lords, and hear me speak.

QUEEN MARGARET
 Defy them, then, or else hold close thy lips.

KING HENRY
 I prithee give no limits to my tongue±±
 I am a king, and privileged to speak. 120

CLIFFORD
 My liege, the wound that bred this meeting here
 Cannot be cured by words±±therefore be still.

RICHARD
 Then, executioner, unsheathe thy sword.
 By him that made us all, I am resolved
 That Clifford's manhood lies upon his tongue. 125

EDWARD
 Say, Henry, shall I have my right or no?
 A thousand men have broke their fasts today
 That ne'er shall dine unless thou yield the crown.

WARWICK (*to King Henry*)
 If thou deny, their blood upon thy head;
 For York in justice puts his armour on. 130

PRINCE EDWARD
 If that be right which Warwick says is right,
 There is no wrong, but everything is right.

RICHARD
 Whoever got thee, there thy mother stands±±
 For, well I wot, thou hast thy mother's tongue.

QUEEN MARGARET
 But thou art neither like thy sire nor dam, 135
 But like a foul misshapen stigmatic,
 Marked by the destinies to be avoided,
 As venom toads or lizards' dreadful stings.

RICHARD
 Iron of Naples, hid with English guilt,
 Whose father bears the title of a king±± 140
 As if a channel should be called the sea±±
 Sham'st thou not, knowing whence thou art
 extraught,
 To let thy tongue detect thy base-born heart?

EDWARD
 A wisp of straw were worth a thousand crowns
 To make this shameless callet know herself. 145

Helen of Greece was fairer far than thou,
Although thy husband may be Menelaus;
And ne'er was Agamemnon's brother wronged
By that false woman, as this king by thee.
His father revelled in the heart of France, 150
And tamed the King, and made the Dauphin stoop;
And had he matched according to his state,
He might have kept that glory to this day.
But when he took a beggar to his bed,
And graced thy poor sire with his bridal day, 155
Even then that sunshine brewed a shower for him
That washed his father's fortunes forth of France,
And heaped sedition on his crown at home.
For what hath broached this tumult but thy pride?
Hadst thou been meek, our title still had slept, 160
And we, in pity of the gentle King,
Had slipped our claim until another age.

GEORGE (*to Queen Margaret*)

But when we saw our sunshine made thy spring,
And that thy summer bred us no increase,
We set the axe to thy usurping root. 165
And though the edge hath something hit ourselves,
Yet know thou, since we have begun to strike,
We'll never leave till we have hewn thee down,
Or bathed thy growing with our heated bloods.

EDWARD (*to Queen Margaret*)

And in this resolution I defy thee, 170
Not willing any longer conference
Since thou deniest the gentle King to speak.
Sound trumpets±±let our bloody colours wave!
And either victory, or else a grave!

QUEEN MARGARET Stay, Edward. 175

EDWARD

No, wrangling woman, we'll no longer stay±±
These words will cost ten thousand lives this day.
[Flourish. March. Exeunt Edward and his men
at one door and Queen Margaret and her men
at another door]