

Richard Duke of York

5.6

Enter on the walls King Henry the Sixth, reading a book, Richard Duke of Gloucester, and the Lieutenant of the Tower

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER

Good day, my lord. What, at your book so hard?

KING HENRY

Ay, my good lord±±`my lord', I should say, rather.

'Tis sin to flatter; `good' was little better.

`Good Gloucester' and `good devil' were alike,

And both preposterous±±therefore not `good lord'. 5

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER *(to the Lieutenant)*

Sirrah, leave us to ourselves. We must confer.

Exit Lieutenant

KING HENRY

So flies the reckless shepherd from the wolf;

So first the harmless sheep doth yield his fleece,

And next his throat unto the butcher's knife.

What scene of death hath Roscius now to act? 10

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER

Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind;

The thief doth fear each bush an officer.

KING HENRY

The bird that hath been limeÁd in a bush

With trembling wings misdoubteth every bush.

And I, the hapless male to one sweet bird, 15

Have now the fatal object in my eye

Where my poor young was limed, was caught and
killed.

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER

Why, what a peevish fool was that of Crete,

That taught his son the office of a fowl!

And yet, for all his wings, the fool was drowned. 20

KING HENRY

I, Daedalus; my poor boy, Icarus;

Thy father, Minos, that denied our course;

The sun that seared the wings of my sweet boy,

Thy brother Edward; and thyself, the sea,

Whose envious gulf did swallow up his life. 25
Ah, kill me with thy weapon, not with words!
My breast can better brook thy dagger's point
Than can my ears that tragic history.
But wherefore dost thou come? Is't for my life?

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER

Think'st thou I am an executioner? 30

KING HENRY

A persecutor I am sure thou art;
If murdering innocents be executing,
Why, then thou art an executioner.

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER

Thy son I killed for his presumption.

KING HENRY

Hadst thou been killed when first thou didst presume, 35
Thou hadst not lived to kill a son of mine.
And thus I prophesy: that many a thousand
Which now mistrust no parcel of my fear,
And many an old man's sigh, and many a widow's,
And many an orphan's water-standing eye±± 40
Men for their sons', wives for their husbands',
Orphans for their parents' timeless death±±
Shall rue the hour that ever thou wast born.
The owl shrieked at thy birth±±an evil sign;
The night-crow cried, aboding luckless time; 45
Dogs howled, and hideous tempests shook down trees;
The raven rooked her on the chimney's top;
And chatt'ring pies in dismal discords sung.
Thy mother felt more than a mother's pain,
And yet brought forth less than a mother's hope±± 50
To wit, an indigested and deformed lump,
Not like the fruit of such a goodly tree.
Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born,
To signify thou cam'st to bite the world;
And if the rest be true which I have heard 55
Thou cam'st±±

RICHARD

I'll hear no more. Die, prophet, in thy speech,
He stabs him

For this, amongst the rest, was I ordained.

KING HENRY

Ay, and for much more slaughter after this.
O, God forgive my sins, and pardon thee. 60

He dies

RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER

What $\pm\pm$ will the aspiring blood of Lancaster
Sink in the ground? I thought it would have mounted.
See how my sword weeps for the poor King's death.
O, may such purple tears be alway shed
From those that wish the downfall of our house! 65
If any spark of life be yet remaining,
Down, down to hell, and say I sent thee thither $\pm\pm$

He stabs him again

I that have neither pity, love, nor fear.
Indeed, 'tis true that Henry told me of,
For I have often heard my mother say 70
I came into the world with my legs forward.
Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
And seek their ruin that usurped our right?
The midwife wondered and the women cried
'O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!' $\pm\pm$ 75

And so I was, which plainly signified
That I should snarl and bite and play the dog.
Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
Let hell make crooked my mind to answer it.
I had no father, I am like no father; 80
I have no brother, I am like no brother;
And this word, 'love', which greybeards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another
And not in me $\pm\pm$ I am myself alone.

Clarence, beware; thou kept'st me from the light $\pm\pm$ 85
But I will sort a pitchy day for thee.
For I will buzz abroad such prophecies
That Edward shall be fearful of his life,
And then, to purge his fear, I'll be thy death.
Henry and his son are gone; thou, Clarence, art next; 90
And by one and one I will dispatch the rest,
Counting myself but bad till I be best.
I'll throw thy body in another room
And triumph, Henry, in thy day of doom.

Exit with the body