

Richard III

3.7

*Enter Richard Duke of Gloucester at one door and
the Duke of Buckingham at another*

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

How now, how now! What say the citizens?

BUCKINGHAM

Now, by the holy mother of our Lord,
The citizens are mum, say not a word.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Touched you the bastardy of Edward's children?

BUCKINGHAM

I did, with his contract with Lady Lucy, 5
And his contract by deputy in France,
Th'insatiate greediness of his desire,
And his enforcement of the city wives,
His tyranny for trifles, his own bastardy±±
As being got your father then in France, 10
And his resemblance, being not like the Duke.
Withal, I did infer your lineaments±±
Being the right idea of your father
Both in your face and nobleness of mind;
Laid open all your victories in Scotland, 15
Your discipline in war, wisdom in peace,
Your bounty, virtue, fair humility±±
Indeed, left nothing fitting for your purpose
Untouched or slightly handled in discourse.
And when mine oratory grew toward end, 20
I bid them that did love their country's good
Cry `God save Richard, England's royal king!'

RICHARD GLOUCESTER And did they so?

BUCKINGHAM

No, so God help me. They spake not a word,
But, like dumb statuas or breathing stones, 25
Stared each on other and looked deadly pale±±
Which, when I saw, I reprehended them,
And asked the Mayor, what meant this wilful silence?
His answer was, the people were not used

To be spoke to but by the Recorder. 30
 Then he was urged to tell my tale again:
 `Thus saith the Duke...thus hath the Duke
 inferred'±±
 But nothing spoke in warrant from himself.
 When he had done, some followers of mine own,
 At lower end of the Hall, hurled up their caps, 35
 And some ten voices cried `God save King Richard!'
 And thus I took the vantage of those few:
 `Thanks, gentle citizens and friends', quoth I;
 `This general applause and cheerful shout
 Argues your wisdoms and your love to Richard'±± 40
 And even here brake off and came away.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
 What tongueless blocks were they! Would they not
 speak?

[BUCKINGHAM] No, by my troth, my lord.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
 Will not the Mayor then, and his brethren, come?

BUCKINGHAM
 The Mayor is here at hand. Intend some fear; 45
 Be not you spoke with, but by mighty suit;
 And look you get a prayer book in your hand,
 And stand between two churchmen, good my lord,
 For on that ground I'll build a holy descant.
 And be not easily won to our request. 50
 Play the maid's part: still answer `nay'±±and take it.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
 I go. An if you plead as well for them
 As I can say nay to thee for myself,
 No doubt we'll bring it to a happy issue.
 One knocks within

BUCKINGHAM
 Go, go, up to the leads! The Lord Mayor knocks.±± 55
 Exit Richard
 Enter the Lord Mayor, aldermen, and citizens
 Welcome, my lord. I dance attendance here.
 I think the Duke will not be spoke withal.
 Enter Catesby
 Now Catesby, what says your lord to my request?

CATESBY

He doth entreat your grace, my noble lord,
To visit him tomorrow, or next day. 60
He is within with two right reverend fathers,
Divinely bent to meditation,
And in no worldly suits would he be moved,
To draw him from his holy exercise.

BUCKINGHAM

Return, good Catesby, to the gracious Duke. 65
Tell him myself, the Mayor, and aldermen,
In deep designs, in matter of great moment,
No less importing than our general good,
Are come to have some conference with his grace.

CATESBY

I'll signify so much unto him straight. 70
Exit

BUCKINGHAM

Ah ha! My lord, this prince is not an Edward.
He is not lolling on a lewd day-bed,
But on his knees at meditation;
Not dallying with a brace of courtesans,
But meditating with two deep divines; 75
Not sleeping to engross his idle body,
But praying to enrich his watchful soul.
Happy were England would this virtuous prince
Take on his grace the sovereignty thereof.
But, sure I fear, we shall not win him to it. 80

MAYOR

Marry, God defend his grace should say us nay.

BUCKINGHAM

I fear he will. Here Catesby comes again.
Enter Catesby

Now Catesby, what says his grace?

CATESBY

He wonders to what end you have assembled
Such troops of citizens to come to him, 85
His grace not being warned thereof before.
He fears, my lord, you mean no good to him.

BUCKINGHAM

Sorry I am my noble cousin should
Suspect me that I mean no good to him.
By heaven, we come to him in perfect love, 90

And so once more return and tell his grace.

Exit Catesby

When holy and devout religious men
Are at their beads, 'tis much to draw them thence.
So sweet is zealous contemplation.

*Enter Richard aloft, between two bishops. [Enter
Catesby below]*

MAYOR

See where his grace stands 'tween two clergymen. 95

BUCKINGHAM

Two props of virtue for a Christian prince,
To stay him from the fall of vanity;
And see, a book of prayer in his hand±±
True ornaments to know a holy man.±±
Famous Plantagenet, most gracious prince, 100
Lend favourable ear to our request,
And pardon us the interruption
Of thy devotion and right Christian zeal.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

My lord, there needs no such apology.
I do beseech your grace to pardon me, 105
Who, earnest in the service of my God,
Deferred the visitation of my friends.
But leaving this, what is your grace's pleasure?

BUCKINGHAM

Even that, I hope, which pleaseth God above,
And all good men of this ungoverned isle. 110

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

I do suspect I have done some offence
That seems disgraceful in the city's eye,
And that you come to reprehend my ignorance.

BUCKINGHAM

You have, my lord. Would it might please your grace
On our entreaties to amend your fault. 115

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Else wherefore breathe I in a Christian land?

BUCKINGHAM

Know then, it is your fault that you resign
The supreme seat, the throne majestic,
The sceptred office of your ancestors,
Your state of fortune and your due of birth, 120

The lineal glory of your royal house,
 To the corruption of a blemished stock,
 Whiles in the mildness of your sleepy thoughts±±
 Which here we waken to our country's good±±
 The noble isle doth want her proper limbs: 125
 Her face defaced with scars of infamy,
 Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants
 And almost shouldered in the swallowing gulf
 Of dark forgetfulness and deep oblivion,
 Which to recure we heartily solicit 130
 Your gracious self to take on you the charge
 And kingly government of this your land±±
 Not as Protector, steward, substitute,
 Or lowly factor for another's gain,
 But as successively, from blood to blood, 135
 Your right of birth, your empery, your own.
 For this, consorted with the citizens,
 Your very worshipful and loving friends,
 And by their vehement instigation,
 In this just cause come I to move your grace. 140

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

I cannot tell if to depart in silence
 Or bitterly to speak in your reproof
 Best fitteth my degree or your condition.
 Your love deserves my thanks; but my desert,
 Unmeritable, shuns your high request. 145
 First, if all obstacles were cut away
 And that my path were even to the crown,
 As the ripe revenue and due of birth,
 Yet so much is my poverty of spirit,
 So mighty and so many my defects, 150
 That I would rather hide me from my greatness±±
 Being a barque to brook no mighty sea±±
 Than in my greatness covet to be hid,
 And in the vapour of my glory smothered.
 But God be thanked, there is no need of me, 155
 And much I need to help you, were there need.
 The royal tree hath left us royal fruit,
 Which, mellowed by the stealing hours of time,
 Will well become the seat of majesty

And make, no doubt, us happy by his reign. 160
On him I lay that you would lay on me,
The right and fortune of his happy stars,
Which God defend that I should wring from him.

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, this argues conscience in your grace,
But the respects thereof are nice and trivial, 165
All circumstances well considereÁd.
You say that Edward is your brother's son;
So say we, too±±but not by Edward's wife.
For first was he contract to Lady Lucy±±
Your mother lives a witness to his vow±± 170
And afterward, by substitute, betrothed
To Bona, sister to the King of France.
These both put off, a poor petitioner,
A care-crazed mother to a many sons,
A beauty-waning and distresseÁd widow 175
Even in the afternoon of her best days,
Made prize and purchase of his wanton eye,
Seduced the pitch and height of his degree
To base declension and loathed bigamy.
By her in his unlawful bed he got 180
This Edward, whom our manners call the Prince.
More bitterly could I expostulate,
Save that for reverence to some alive
I give a sparing limit to my tongue.
Then, good my lord, take to your royal self 185
This proffered benefit of dignity±±
If not to bless us and the land withal,
Yet to draw forth your noble ancestry
From the corruption of abusing times,
Unto a lineal, true-deriveÁd course. 190

MAYOR (*to Richard*)

Do, good my lord; your citizens entreat you.

BUCKINGHAM (*to Richard*)

Refuse not, mighty lord, this proffered love.

CATESBY (*to Richard*)

O make them joyful: grant their lawful suit.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Alas, why would you heap this care on me?

I am unfit for state and majesty. 195
I do beseech you, take it not amiss.
I cannot, nor I will not, yield to you.

BUCKINGHAM

If you refuse it^{±±}as, in love and zeal,
Loath to depose the child, your brother's son,
As well we know your tenderness of heart 200
And gentle, kind, effeminate remorse,
Which we have noted in you to your kindred,
And equally indeed to all estates^{±±}
Yet know, whe'er you accept our suit or no,
Your brother's son shall never reign our king, 205
But we will plant some other in the throne,
To the disgrace and downfall of your house.
And in this resolution here we leave you.^{±±}
Come, citizens. 'Swounds, I'll entreat no more.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

O do not swear, my lord of Buckingham. 210
[Exeunt Buckingham and some others]

CATESBY

Call him again, sweet prince. Accept their suit.

[ANOTHER]

If you deny them, all the land will rue it.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Will you enforce me to a world of cares?
Call them again.

Exit one or more

I am not made of stone,
But penetrable to your kind entreats, 215
Albeit against my conscience and my soul.

Enter Buckingham and the rest

Cousin of Buckingham, and sage, grave men,
Since you will buckle fortune on my back,
To bear her burden, whe'er I will or no,
I must have patience to endure the load. 220
But if black scandal or foul-faced reproach
Attend the sequel of your imposition,
Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
From all the impure blots and stains thereof;
For God doth know, and you may partly see, 225

How far I am from the desire of this.

MAYOR

God bless your grace! We see it, and will say it.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

In saying so, you shall but say the truth.

BUCKINGHAM

Then I salute you with this royal title:

Long live kind Richard, England's worthy king!

230

[ALL BUT RICHARD] Amen.

BUCKINGHAM

Tomorrow may it please you to be crowned?

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Even when you please, for you will have it so.

BUCKINGHAM

Tomorrow then, we will attend your grace.

And so, most joyfully, we take our leave.

235

RICHARD GLOUCESTER *(to the bishops)*

Come, let us to our holy work again.±±

Farewell, my cousin. Farewell, gentle friends.

*Exeunt Richard and bishops above, the rest
below*