

The First Part of the Contention

2.3

Sound trumpets. Enter King Henry and state, with guard, to banish the Duchess: King Henry and Queen Margaret, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, the Duke of Suffolk [and the Duke of Buckingham, Cardinal Beaufort], and, led with officers, Dame Eleanor Cobham the Duchess, Margery Jordan the witch, John Southwell and Sir John Hume the two priests, and Roger Bolingbroke the conjuror; [then enter to them] the Duke of York and the Earls of Salisbury [and Warwick]

KING HENRY *(to the Duchess)*

Stand forth, Dame Eleanor Cobham, Gloucester's wife.

She comes forward

In sight of God and us your guilt is great;
Receive the sentence of the law for sins
Such as by God's book are adjudged to death.
(To the Witch, Southwell, Hume, and Bolingbroke)

You four, from hence to prison back again; 5

From thence, unto the place of execution.

The witch in Smithfield shall be burned to ashes,
And you three shall be strangled on the gallows.

[Exeunt Witch, Southwell, Hume, and Bolingbroke, guarded]

(To the Duchess)

You, madam, for you are more nobly born,
DespoileÁd of your honour in your life, 10
Shall, after three days' open penance done,
Live in your country here in banishment
With Sir John Stanley in the Isle of Man.

DUCHESS

Welcome is banishment; welcome were my death.

GLOUCESTER

Eleanor, the law, thou seest, hath judgeÁd thee; 15
I cannot justify whom the law condemns.

[Exit the Duchess, guarded]

Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief.

Ah, Humphrey, this dishonour in thine age
Will bring thy head with sorrow to the grave.

(To King Henry)

I beseech your majesty, give me leave to go. 20
Sorrow would solace, and mine age would ease.

KING HENRY

Stay, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester. Ere thou go,
Give up thy staff. Henry will to himself
Protector be; and God shall be my hope,
My stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet. 25
And go in peace, Humphrey, no less beloved
Than when thou wert Protector to thy King.

QUEEN MARGARET

I see no reason why a king of years
Should be to be protected like a child.
God and King Henry govern England's helm! 30
Give up your staff, sir, and the King his realm.

GLOUCESTER

My staff? Here, noble Henry, is my staff.
As willingly do I the same resign
As erst thy father Henry made it mine;
And even as willing at thy feet I leave it 35
As others would ambitiously receive it.

He lays the staff at King Henry's feet

Farewell, good King. When I am dead and gone,
May honourable peace attend thy throne.

Exit

QUEEN MARGARET

Why, now is Henry King and Margaret Queen,
And Humphrey Duke of Gloucester scarce himself, 40
That bears so shrewd a maim; two pulls at once±±
His lady banished and a limb lopped off.

She picks up the staff

This staff of honour raught, there let it stand
Where it best fits to be, in Henry's hand.

She gives the staff to King Henry

SUFFOLK

Thus droops this lofty pine and hangs his sprays; 45
Thus Eleanor's pride dies in her youngest days.

YORK

Lords, let him go. Please it your majesty,

This is the day appointed for the combat,
And ready are the appellant and defendant±±
The armourer and his man±±to enter the lists, 50
So please your highness to behold the fight.

QUEEN MARGARET

Ay, good my lord, for purposely therefor
Left I the court to see this quarrel tried.

KING HENRY

A God's name, see the lists and all things fit;
Here let them end it, and God defend the right.

55

YORK

I never saw a fellow worse bestead,
Or more afraid to fight, than is the appellant,
The servant of this armourer, my lords.

*Enter at one door Horner the armourer and his
Neighbours, drinking to him so much that he is
drunken; and he enters with a drummer before him
and [carrying] his staff with a sandbag fastened to
it. Enter at the other door Peter his man, also with
a drummer and a staff with sandbag, and Prentices
drinking to him*

FIRST NEIGHBOUR *(offering drink to Horner)* Here, neighbour
Horner, I drink to you in a cup of sack, and fear not, 60
neighbour, you shall do well enough.

SECOND NEIGHBOUR *(offering drink to Horner)* And here,
neighbour, here's a cup of charneco.

THIRD NEIGHBOUR *(offering drink to Horner)* Here's a pot of
good double beer, neighbour, drink and be merry, and 65
fear not your man.

HORNER *[accepting the offers of drink]* Let it come, i'faith
I'll pledge you all, and a fig for Peter.

FIRST PRENTICE *(offering drink to Peter)* Here, Peter, I drink
to thee, and be not afeard. 70

SECOND PRENTICE *(offering drink to Peter)* Here, Peter, here's
a pint of claret wine for thee.

THIRD PRENTICE *(offering drink to Peter)* And here's a quart
for me, and be merry, Peter, and fear not thy master.
Fight for credit of the prentices! 75

PETER *[refusing the offers of drink]* I thank you all. Drink
and pray for me, I pray you, for I think I have taken

my last draught in this world. Here, Robin, an if I die,
I give thee my apron; and, Will, thou shalt have my
hammer; and here, Tom, take all the money that I 80
have. O Lord bless me, I pray God, for I am never able
to deal with my master, he hath learned so much fence
already.

SALISBURY Come, leave your drinking, and fall to blows.
(To Peter) Sirrah, what's thy name? 85

PETER Peter, forsooth.

SALISBURY Peter? What more?

PETER Thump.

SALISBURY Thump! Then see that thou thump thy master
well. 90

HORNER Masters, I am come hither, as it were, upon my
man's instigation, to prove him a knave and myself an
honest man; and touching the Duke of York, I will
take my death I never meant him any ill, nor the King,
nor the Queen; and therefore, Peter, have at thee with 95
a downright blow.

YORK

Dispatch; this knave's tongue begins to double.

*Sound trumpets an alarum to the combatants. They
fight and Peter hits Horner on the head and strikes
him down*

HORNER Hold, Peter, hold±±I confess, I confess treason.
He dies

YORK (to an attendant, pointing to Horner) Take away his
weapon. (To Peter) Fellow, thank God and the good 100
wine in thy master's wame.

PETER [kneeling] O God, have I overcome mine enemy in
this presence? O, Peter, thou hast prevailed in right.

KING HENRY (to attendants, pointing to Horner)

Go, take hence that traitor from our sight,
For by his death we do perceive his guilt. 105
And God in justice hath revealed to us
The truth and innocence of this poor fellow,
Which he had thought to have murdered wrongfully.
(To Peter) Come, fellow, follow us for thy reward.

*Sound a flourish. Exeunt, some carrying
Horner's body*