

Richard III

2.2

Enter the old Duchess of York with the two children of Clarence

BOY

Good grannam, tell us, is our father dead?

DUCHESS No, boy.

GIRL

Why do you weep so oft, and beat your breast,
And cry, 'O Clarence, my unhappy son'?

BOY

Why do you look on us and shake your head, 5
And call us orphans, wretches, castaways,
If that our noble father were alive?

DUCHESS OF YORK

My pretty cousins, you mistake me both.
I do lament the sickness of the King,
As loath to lose him, not your father's death. 10
It were lost sorrow to wail one that's lost.

BOY

Then you conclude, my grannam, he is dead.
The King mine uncle is to blame for this.
God will revenge it±±whom I will importune
With earnest prayers, all to that effect. 15

GIRL And so will I.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Peace, children, peace! The King doth love you well.
Incapable and shallow innocents,
You cannot guess who caused your father's death.

BOY

Grannam, we can. For my good uncle Gloucester 20
Told me the King, provoked to it by the Queen,
Devised impeachments to imprison him,
And when my uncle told me so he wept,
And pitied me, and kindly kissed my cheek,
Bade me rely on him as on my father, 25
And he would love me dearly as his child.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes,

And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice!
He is my son, ay, and therein my shame;
Yet from my dugs he drew not this deceit. 30

BOY

Think you my uncle did dissemble, grannam?

DUCHESS OF YORK Ay, boy.

BOY

I cannot think it. Hark, what noise is this?

Enter Queen Elizabeth with her hair about her ears

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Ah, who shall hinder me to wail and weep?
To chide my fortune, and torment myself? 35
I'll join with black despair against my soul,
And to myself become an enemy.

DUCHESS OF YORK

What means this scene of rude impatience?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

To mark an act of tragic violence.
Edward, my lord, thy son, our king, is dead. 40
Why grow the branches when the root is gone?
Why wither not the leaves that want their sap?
If you will live, lament; if die, be brief,
That our swift-winged souls may catch the King's,
Or like obedient subjects follow him 45
To his new kingdom of ne'er-changing night.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Ah, so much interest have I in thy sorrow
As I had title in thy noble husband.
I have bewept a worthy husband's death,
And lived with looking on his images. 50
But now two mirrors of his princely semblance
Are cracked in pieces by malignant death,
And I for comfort have but one false glass,
That grieves me when I see my shame in him.
Thou art a widow, yet thou art a mother, 55
And hast the comfort of thy children left.
But death hath snatched my husband from mine arms
And plucked two crutches from my feeble hands,
Clarence and Edward. O what cause have I,
Thine being but a moiety of my moan, 60
To overgo thy woes, and drown thy cries?

BOY *(to Elizabeth)*

Ah, aunt, you wept not for our father's death.
How can we aid you with our kindred tears?

DAUGHTER *(to Elizabeth)*

Our fatherless distress was left unmoaned;
Your widow-dolour likewise be unwept.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH

Give me no help in lamentation.
I am not barren to bring forth complaints.
All springs reduce their currents to mine eyes,
That I, being governed by the wat'ry moon,
May send forth plenteous tears to drown the world. 70
Ah, for my husband, for my dear Lord Edward!

CHILDREN

Ah, for our father, for our dear Lord Clarence!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Alas, for both, both mine, Edward and Clarence!

QUEEN ELIZABETH

What stay had I but Edward, and he's gone?

CHILDREN

What stay had we but Clarence, and he's gone?

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DUCHESS OF YORK

What stays had I but they, and they are gone?

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Was never widow had so dear a loss!

CHILDREN

Were never orphans had so dear a loss!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Was never mother had so dear a loss!
Alas, I am the mother of these griefs. 80
Their woes are parcelled; mine is general.
She for an Edward weeps, and so do I;
I for a Clarence weep, so doth not she.
These babes for Clarence weep, and so do I;
I for an Edward weep, so do not they. 85
Alas, you three on me, threefold distressed,
Pour all your tears. I am your sorrow's nurse,
And I will pamper it with lamentation.

*Enter Richard Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of
Buckingham, Lord Stanley Earl of Derby, Lord
Hastings, and Sir Richard Ratcliffe*

RICHARD GLOUCESTER *(to Elizabeth)*

Sister, have comfort. All of us have cause
To wail the dimming of our shining star, 90
But none can help our harms by wailing them.±±
Madam, my mother, I do cry you mercy.
I did not see your grace. Humbly on my knee
I crave your blessing.

DUCHESS OF YORK

God bless thee, and put meekness in thy breast, 95
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Amen. *(Aside)* 'And make me die a good old man.'
That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing;
I marvel that her grace did leave it out.

BUCKINGHAM

You cloudy princes and heart-sorrowing peers 100
That bear this heavy mutual load of moan,
Now cheer each other in each other's love.
Though we have spent our harvest of this king,
We are to reap the harvest of his son.
The broken rancour of your high-swoll'n hearts 105
But lately splinted, knit, and joined together,
Must gently be preserved, cherished, and kept.
Meseemeth good that, with some little train,
Forthwith from Ludlow the young Prince be fet
Hither to London to be crowned our king. 110

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Then be it so, and go we to determine
Who they shall be that straight shall post to Ludlow.±±
Madam, and you my sister, will you go
To give your censures in this weighty business?

QUEEN ELIZABETH AND DUCHESS OF YORK With all our hearts. 115

Exeunt all but Richard and Buckingham

BUCKINGHAM

My lord, whoever journeys to the Prince,
For God's sake let not us two stay at home,
For by the way I'll sort occasion,
As index to the story we late talked of,
To part the Queen's proud kindred from the Prince. 120

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

My other self, my counsel's consistory,

My oracle, my prophet, my dear cousin!
I, as a child, will go by thy direction.
Towards Ludlow then, for we'll not stay behind.

Exeunt