

# Richard III

## 1.2

*Enter gentlemen, bearing the corpse of King Henry the Sixth in an open coffin, with halberdiers to guard it, Lady Anne being the mourner*

LADY ANNE

Set down, set down your honourable load,  
If honour may be shrouded in a hearse,  
Whilst I a while obsequiously lament  
Th'untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.

*They set the coffin down*

Poor key-cold figure of a holy king, 5  
Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster,  
Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood:  
Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost  
To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,  
Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaughtered son, 10  
Stabbed by the selfsame hand that made these wounds.  
Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life,  
I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.  
O curse! Ad be the hand that made these holes,  
Curse! Ad the blood that let this blood from hence, 15  
Curse! Ad the heart that had the heart to do it.  
More direful hap betide that hated wretch  
That makes us wretched by the death of thee  
Than I can wish to wolves, to spiders, toads,  
Or any creeping venom'd thing that lives. 20  
If ever he have child, abortive be it,  
Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,  
Whose ugly and unnatural aspect  
May fright the hopeful mother at the view,  
And that be heir to his unhappiness. 25  
If ever he have wife, let her be made  
More miserable by the death of him  
Than I am made by my young lord and thee.±±  
Come now towards Chertsey with your holy load,  
Taken from Paul's to be interred there, 30

*[The gentlemen lift the coffin]*

And still as you are weary of this weight  
Rest you, whiles I lament King Henry's corpse.

*Enter Richard Duke of Gloucester*

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** *(to the gentlemen)*

Stay, you that bear the corpse, and set it down.

**LADY ANNE**

What black magician conjures up this fiend  
To stop devoted charitable deeds?

35

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** *(to the gentlemen)*

Villains, set down the corpse, or by Saint Paul  
I'll make a corpse of him that disobeys.

**[HALBERDIER]**

My lord, stand back and let the coffin pass.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Unmannered dog, stand thou when I command.  
Advance thy halberd higher than my breast,  
Or by Saint Paul I'll strike thee to my foot  
And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

40

*They set the coffin down*

**LADY ANNE** *(to gentlemen and halberdiers)*

What, do you tremble? Are you all afraid?  
Alas, I blame you not, for you are mortal,  
And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.±±  
Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell.  
Thou hadst but power over his mortal body;  
His soul thou canst not have; therefore be gone.

45

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Sweet saint, for charity be not so cursed.

**LADY ANNE**

Foul devil, for God's sake hence and trouble us not,  
For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,  
Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclams.  
If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,  
Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.±±  
O gentlemen, see, see! Dead Henry's wounds  
Ope their congealed mouths and bleed afresh.±±  
Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity,  
For 'tis thy presence that ex-hales this blood  
From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells.  
Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,

50

55

60

Provokes this deluge supernatural.  
O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death.  
O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death.  
Either heav'n with lightning strike the murd'rer dead,  
Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick 65  
As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood,  
Which his hell-governed arm hath butchereÁd.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Lady, you know no rules of charity,  
Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.

**LADY ANNE**

Villain, thou know'st no law of God nor man. 70  
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

But I know none, and therefore am no beast.

**LADY ANNE**

O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

More wonderful, when angels are so angry.  
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman, 75  
Of these supposeÁd crimes to give me leave  
By circumstance but to acquit myself.

**LADY ANNE**

Vouchsafe, diffused infection of a man,  
Of these known evils but to give me leave  
By circumstance t'accuse thy curseÁd self. 80

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have  
Some patient leisure to excuse myself.

**LADY ANNE**

Fouler than heart can think thee, thou canst make  
No excuse current but to hang thyself.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

By such despair I should accuse myself. 85

**LADY ANNE**

And by despairing shalt thou stand excused,  
For doing worthy vengeance on thyself  
That didst unworthy slaughter upon others.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Say that I slew them not.

**LADY ANNE**

Then say they were not slain.

But dead they are±±and, devilish slave, by thee. 90

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

I did not kill your husband.

**LADY ANNE**

Why, then he is alive.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Nay, he is dead, and slain by Edward's hand.

**LADY ANNE**

In thy foul throat thou liest. Queen Margaret saw  
Thy murd'rous falchion smoking in his blood,  
The which thou once didst bend against her breast, 95  
But that thy brothers beat aside the point.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

I was provokeÁd by her sland'rous tongue,  
That laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders.

**LADY ANNE**

Thou wast provokeÁd by thy bloody mind,  
That never dream'st on aught but butcheries. 100  
Didst thou not kill this king?

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

I grant ye.

**LADY ANNE**

Dost grant me, hedgehog? Then God grant me, too,  
Thou mayst be damneÁd for that wicked deed.  
O he was gentle, mild, and virtuous.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

The better for the King of Heaven that hath him. 105

**LADY ANNE**

He *is* in heaven, where thou shalt never come.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Let him thank me that help to send him thither,  
For he was fitter for that place than earth.

**LADY ANNE**

And thou unfit for any place but hell.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it. 110

**LADY ANNE**

Some dungeon.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Your bedchamber.

**LADY ANNE**

Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

So will it, madam, till I lie with you.

**LADY ANNE**

I hope so.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** I know so. But gentle Lady Anne,  
To leave this keen encounter of our wits 115  
And fall something into a slower method,  
Is not the causer of the timeless deaths  
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,  
As blameful as the executioner?

**LADY ANNE**  
Thou wast the cause of that accursed effect. 120

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**  
Your beauty was the cause of that effect±±  
Your beauty that did haunt me in my sleep  
To undertake the death of all the world  
So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

**LADY ANNE**  
If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide, 125  
These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**  
These eyes could not endure sweet beauty's wreck.  
You should not blemish it if I stood by.  
As all the world is cheereÁd by the sun,  
So I by that: it is my day, my life. 130

**LADY ANNE**  
Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**  
Curse not thyself, fair creature: thou art both.

**LADY ANNE**  
I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**  
It is a quarrel most unnatural,  
To be revenged on him that loveth you. 135

**LADY ANNE**  
It is a quarrel just and reasonable,  
To be revenged on him that killed my husband.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**  
He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband,  
Did it to help thee to a better husband.

**LADY ANNE**  
His better doth not breathe upon the earth. 140

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**  
He lives that loves thee better than he could.

**LADY ANNE**

Name him.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** Plantagenet.

**LADY ANNE**

Why, that was he.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

The selfsame name, but one of better nature.

**LADY ANNE**

Where is he?

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** Here.

*She spits at him*

Why

dost thou spit at me?

**LADY ANNE**

Would it were mortal poison for thy sake.

145

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Never came poison from so sweet a place.

**LADY ANNE**

Never hung poison on a fouler toad.

Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

**LADY ANNE**

Would they were basilisks to strike thee dead.

150

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

I would they were, that I might die at once,

For now they kill me with a living death.

Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears,

Shamed their aspects with store of childish drops.

I never sued to friend nor enemy;

155

My tongue could never learn sweet smoothing word;

But now thy beauty is proposed my fee,

My proud heart sues and prompts my tongue to speak.

*She looks scornfully at him*

Teach not thy lip such scorn, for it was made

For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.

160

If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,

*[He kneels and offers her his sword]*

Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,

Which if thou please to hide in this true breast

And let the soul forth that adareth thee,

I lay it naked to the deadly stroke

165

And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

*He lays his breast open; she offers at it with his sword*

Nay, do not pause, for I did kill King Henry;  
But 'twas thy beauty that provokeÁd me.  
Nay, now dispatch: 'twas I that stabbed young  
Edward;

But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on. 170

*She drops the sword*

Take up the sword again, or take up me.

**LADY ANNE**

Arise, dissembler.

*[He rises]*

Though I wish thy death,

I will not be thy executioner.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it.

**LADY ANNE**

I have already.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** That was in thy rage. 175

Speak it again, and even with the word  
This hand±±which for thy love did kill thy love±±  
Shall, for thy love, kill a far truer love.

To both their deaths shalt thou be accessary.

**LADY ANNE** I would I knew thy heart. 180

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** 'Tis figured in my tongue.

**LADY ANNE** I fear me both are false.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** Then never man was true.

**LADY ANNE** Well, well, put up your sword.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** Say then my peace is made. 185

**LADY ANNE** That shalt thou know hereafter.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** But shall I live in hope?

**LADY ANNE** All men, I hope, live so.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER** Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

**LADY ANNE** To take is not to give. 190

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger;  
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart.  
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.

And if thy poor devoted servant may  
But beg one favour at thy gracious hand, 195

Thou dost confirm his happiness for ever.

**LADY ANNE** What is it?

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

That it may please you leave these sad designs  
To him that hath most cause to be a mourner,  
And presently repair to Crosby House, 200  
Where $\pm\pm$ after I have solemnly interred  
At Chertsey monast'ry this noble king,  
And wet his grave with my repentant tears $\pm\pm$   
I will with all expedient duty see you.  
For divers unknown reasons, I beseech you 205  
Grant me this boon.

**LADY ANNE**

With all my heart $\pm\pm$ and much it joys me, too,  
To see you are become so penitent.  
Tressell and Berkeley, go along with me.

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Bid me farewell.

**LADY ANNE** 'Tis more than you deserve. 210

But since you teach me how to flatter you,  
Imagine I have said farewell already.

*Exeunt two with Anne*

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

Sirs, take up the corpse.

**GENTLEMAN** Towards Chertsey, noble lord?

**RICHARD GLOUCESTER**

No, to Blackfriars; there attend my coming.

*Exeunt with corpse all but Gloucester*

Was ever woman in this humour wooed? 215

Was ever woman in this humour won?

I'll have her, but I will not keep her long.

What, I that killed her husband and his father,

To take her in her heart's extremest hate,

With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes, 220

The bleeding witness of my hatred by,

Having God, her conscience, and these bars against  
me,

And I no friends to back my suit withal

But the plain devil and dissembling looks $\pm\pm$

And yet to win her, all the world to nothing? Ha! 225



Hath she forgot already that brave prince,  
Edward her lord, whom I some three months since  
Stabbed in my angry mood at Tewkesbury?  
A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,  
Framed in the prodigality of nature, 230  
Young, valiant, wise, and no doubt right royal,  
The spacious world cannot again afford±±  
And will she yet abase her eyes on me,  
That cropped the golden prime of this sweet prince  
And made her widow to a woeful bed? 235  
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?  
On me, that halts and am misshapen thus?  
My dukedom to a beggarly *denier*,  
I do mistake my person all this while.  
Upon my life she finds, although I cannot, 240  
Myself to be a marv'lous proper man.  
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass  
And entertain a score or two of tailors  
To study fashions to adorn my body.  
Since I am crept in favour with myself, 245  
I will maintain it with some little cost.  
But first I'll turn yon fellow in his grave,  
And then return lamenting to my love.  
Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,  
That I may see my shadow as I pass. 250  
*Exit*