

Richard II

5.3

Enter Bolingbroke, crowned King Henry, with Harry Percy, and other nobles

KING HENRY

Can no man tell of my unthrifty son?
'Tis full three months since I did see him last.
If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.
I would to God, my lords, he might be found.
Enquire at London 'mongst the taverns there, 5
For there, they say, he daily doth frequent
With unrestrained loose companions±±
Even such, they say, as stand in narrow lanes
And beat our watch and rob our passengers±±
Which he, young wanton and effeminate boy, 10
Takes on the point of honour to support
So dissolute a crew.

HARRY PERCY

My lord, some two days since, I saw the Prince,
And told him of these triumphs held at Oxford.

KING HENRY And what said the gallant? 15

HARRY PERCY

His answer was he would unto the stews,
And from the common'st creature pluck a glove,
And wear it as a favour, and with that
He would unhorse the lustiest challenger.

KING HENRY

As dissolute as desperate. Yet through both 20
I see some sparks of better hope, which elder days
May happily bring forth.

Enter the Duke of Aumerle, amazed

But who comes

here?

AUMERLE Where is the King?

KING HENRY

What means our cousin that he stares and looks so
wildly?

AUMERLE (*kneeling*)

God save your grace! I do beseech your majesty
 To have some conference with your grace alone. 25

KING HENRY *(to lords)*
 Withdraw yourselves, and leave us here alone.
Exeunt all but King Henry and Aumerle
 What is the matter with our cousin now?

AUMERLE
 For ever may my knees grow to the earth,
 My tongue cleave to the roof within my mouth, 30
 Unless a pardon ere I rise or speak.

KING HENRY
 Intended or committed was this fault?
 If on the first, how heinous e'er it be,
 To win thy after-love I pardon thee.

AUMERLE *(rising)*
 Then give me leave that I may turn the key, 35
 That no man enter till my tale be done.

KING HENRY
 Have thy desire.
Aumerle locks the door.
The Duke of York knocks at the door and crieth

YORK *(within)* My liege, beware! Look to thyself!
 Thou hast a traitor in thy presence there.
King Henry draws his sword

KING HENRY *(to Aumerle)* Villain, I'll make thee safe.

AUMERLE
 Stay thy revengeful hand! Thou hast no cause to fear. 40

YORK *(knocking within)*
 Open the door, secure foolhardy King!
 Shall I for love speak treason to thy face?
 Open the door, or I will break it open.
[King Henry] opens the door. Enter the Duke of York

KING HENRY
 What is the matter, uncle? Speak,
 Recover breath, tell us how near is danger, 45
 That we may arm us to encounter it.

YORK
 Peruse this writing here, and thou shalt know
 The treason that my haste forbids me show.
He gives King Henry the paper

AUMERLE

Remember, as thou read'st, thy promise past.
I do repent me. Read not my name there. 50
My heart is not confederate with my hand.

YORK

It was, villain, ere thy hand did set it down.
I tore it from the traitor's bosom, King.
Fear, and not love, begets his penitence.
Forget to pity him, lest pity prove 55
A serpent that will sting thee to the heart.

KING HENRY

O, heinous, strong, and bold conspiracy!
O loyal father of a treacherous son!
Thou sheer, immaculate, and silver fountain,
From whence this stream through muddy passages 60
Hath held his current and defiled himself,
Thy overflow of good converts to bad,
And thy abundant goodness shall excuse
This deadly blot in thy digressing son.

YORK

So shall my virtue be his vice's bawd, 65
And he shall spend mine honour with his shame,
As thriftless sons their scraping fathers' gold.
Mine honour lives when his dishonour dies,
Or my shamed life in his dishonour lies.
Thou kill'st me in his life: giving him breath 70
The traitor lives, the true man's put to death.

DUCHESS OF YORK (*within*)

What ho, my liege, for God's sake let me in!

KING HENRY

What shrill-voiced suppliant makes this eager cry?

DUCHESS OF YORK (*within*)

A woman, and thy aunt, great King; 'tis I.
Speak with me, pity me! Open the door! 75
A beggar begs that never begged before.

KING HENRY

Our scene is altered from a serious thing,
And now changed to 'The Beggar and the King'.
My dangerous cousin, let your mother in.
I know she is come to pray for your foul sin. 80
Aumerle opens the door. Enter the Duchess of York

YORK

If thou do pardon, whosoever pray,
More sins for this forgiveness prosper may.
This festered joint cut off, the rest rest sound.
This let alone will all the rest confound.

DUCHESS OF YORK (*kneeling*)

O King, believe not this hard-hearted man. 85
Love loving not itself, none other can.

YORK

Thou frantic woman, what dost thou make here?
Shall thy old dugs once more a traitor rear?

DUCHESS OF YORK

Sweet York, be patient.±±Hear me, gentle liege.

KING HENRY

Rise up, good aunt.

DUCHESS OF YORK Not yet, I thee beseech. 90

Forever will I kneel upon my knees,
And never see day that the happy sees,
Till thou give joy, until thou bid me joy
By pardoning Rutland, my transgressing boy.

AUMERLE (*kneeling*)

Unto my mother's prayers I bend my knee. 95

YORK (*kneeling*)

Against them both my true joints bended be.
Ill mayst thou thrive if thou grant any grace.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Pleads he in earnest? Look upon his face.
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are in jest.
His words come from his mouth; ours from our
breast. 100

He prays but faintly, and would be denied;
We pray with heart and soul, and all beside.
His weary joints would gladly rise, I know;
Our knees shall kneel till to the ground they grow.
His prayers are full of false hypocrisy; 105
Ours of true zeal and deep integrity.
Our prayers do outpray his; then let them have
That mercy which true prayer ought to have.

[KING HENRY]

Good aunt, stand up.

DUCHESS OF YORK Nay, do not say 'Stand up'.

Say `Pardon' first, and afterwards `Stand up'. 110
An if I were thy nurse, thy tongue to teach,
`Pardon' should be the first word of thy speech.
I never longed to hear a word till now.
Say `Pardon', King. Let pity teach thee how.
The word is short, but not so short as sweet; 115
No word like `Pardon' for kings' mouths so meet.

YORK

Speak it in French, King: say `Pardonnez-moi'.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Dost thou teach pardon pardon to destroy?
Ah, my sour husband, my hard-hearted lord
That sets the word itself against the word! 120
Speak `Pardon' as 'tis current in our land;
The chopping French we do not understand.
Thine eye begins to speak; set thy tongue there;
Or in thy piteous heart plant thou thine ear,
That hearing how our complaints and prayers do pierce, 125
Pity may move thee `Pardon' to rehearse.

KING HENRY

Good aunt, stand up.

DUCHESS OF YORK I do not sue to stand.

Pardon is all the suit I have in hand.

KING HENRY

I pardon him as God shall pardon me.

[York and Aumerle rise]

DUCHESS OF YORK

O, happy vantage of a kneeling knee! 130
Yet am I sick for fear. Speak it again.
Twice saying pardon doth not pardon twain,
But makes one pardon strong.

KING HENRY

I pardon him

With all my heart.

DUCHESS OF YORK *(rising)* A god on earth thou art.

KING HENRY

But for our trusty brother-in-law and the Abbot, 135
With all the rest of that consorted crew,
Destruction straight shall dog them at the heels.
Good uncle, help to order several powers
To Oxford, or where'er these traitors are.
They shall not live within this world, I swear, 140

But I will have them if I once know where.
Uncle, farewell; and cousin, so adieu.
Your mother well hath prayed; and prove you true.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Come, my old son. I pray God make thee new.
*Exeunt [King Henry at one door; York, the
Duchess of York, and Aumerle at another door]*