

Richard III

1.1

Enter Richard Duke of Gloucester

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son of York;
And all the clouds that loured upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths, 5
Our bruise'd arms hung up for monuments,
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front,
And now±±instead of mounting barbe'd steeds 10
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries±±
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass, 15
I that am rudely stamped and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph,
I that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time 20
Into this breathing world scarce half made up±±
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them±±
Why, I in this weak piping time of peace
Have no delight to pass away the time, 25
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity.
And therefore since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determine'd to prove a villain 30
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams
To set my brother Clarence and the King

In deadly hate the one against the other. 35

And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up
About a prophecy which says that 'G'
Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be. 40

*Enter George Duke of Clarence, guarded, and Sir
Robert Brackenbury*

Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here Clarence comes.
Brother, good day. What means this armed guard
That waits upon your grace?

CLARENCE His majesty,
Tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed
This conduct to convey me to the Tower. 45

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
Upon what cause?

CLARENCE Because my name is George.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours.
He should for that commit your godfathers.
Belike his majesty hath some intent
That you should be new-christened in the Tower. 50
But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

CLARENCE
Yea, Richard, when I know±±for I protest
As yet I do not. But as I can learn
He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
And from the cross-row plucks the letter 'G' 55
And says a wizard told him that by 'G'
His issue disinherited should be.
And for my name of George begins with 'G',
It follows in his thought that I am he.
These, as I learn, and suchlike toys as these, 60
Hath moved his highness to commit me now.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
Why, this it is when men are ruled by women.
'Tis not the King that sends you to the Tower;
My Lady Gray, his wife±±Clarence, 'tis she
That tempts him to this harsh extremity. 65
Was it not she, and that good man of worship

Anthony Woodeville her brother there,
That made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower,
From whence this present day he is delivered?
We are not safe, Clarence; we are not safe. 70

CLARENCE

By heaven, I think there is no man secure
But the Queen's kindred, and night-walking heralds
That trudge betwixt the King and Mrs Shore.
Heard ye not what an humble suppliant
Lord Hastings was for his delivery? 75

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Humbly complaining to her deity
Got my Lord Chamberlain his liberty.
I'll tell you what: I think it is our way,
If we will keep in favour with the King,
To be her men and wear her livery. 80
The jealous, o'erworn widow and herself,
Since that our brother dubbed them gentlewomen,
Are mighty gossips in our monarchy.

BRACKENBURY

I beseech your graces both to pardon me.
His majesty hath straitly given in charge 85
That no man shall have private conference,
Of what degree soever, with your brother.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Even so. An't please your worship, Brackenbury,
You may partake of anything we say.
We speak no treason, man. We say the King 90
Is wise and virtuous, and his noble Queen
Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous.
We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
A cherry lip,
A bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue, 95
And that the Queen's kin are made gentlefolks.
How say you, sir? Can you deny all this?

BRACKENBURY

With this, my lord, myself have naught to do.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Naught to do with Mrs Shore? I tell thee, fellow:
He that doth naught with her±±excepting one±± 100
Were best to do it secretly alone.

BRACKENBURY What one, my lord?

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Her husband, knave. Wouldst thou betray me?

BRACKENBURY

I beseech your grace to pardon me, and do withal

Forbear your conference with the noble Duke. 105

CLARENCE

We know thy charge, Brackenbury, and will obey.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

We are the Queen's abjects, and must obey.

Brother, farewell. I will unto the King,

And whatsoever you will employ me in±±

Were it to call King Edward's widow `sister'±± 110

I will perform it to enfranchise you.

Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood

Touches me dearer than you can imagine.

CLARENCE

I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Well, your imprisonment shall not be long. 115

I will deliver you or lie for you.

Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE I must perforce. Farewell.

*Exeunt Clarence, Brackenbury, and guard, to
the Tower*

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

Go tread the path that thou shalt ne'er return.

Simple plain Clarence, I do love thee so

That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven, 120

If heaven will take the present at our hands.

But who comes here? The new-delivered Hastings?

Enter Lord Hastings from the Tower

LORD HASTINGS

Good time of day unto my gracious lord.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER

As much unto my good Lord Chamberlain.

Well are you welcome to the open air. 125

How hath your lordship brooked imprisonment?

LORD HASTINGS

With patience, noble lord, as prisoners must.

But I shall live, my lord, to give them thanks

That were the cause of my imprisonment.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
 No doubt, no doubt±±and so shall Clarence too, 130
 For they that were your enemies are his,
 And have prevailed as much on him as you.

LORD HASTINGS
 More pity that the eagles should be mewed
 While kites and buzzards prey at liberty.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER What news abroad? 135

LORD HASTINGS
 No news so bad abroad as this at home:
 The King is sickly, weak, and melancholy,
 And his physicians fear him mightily.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
 Now by Saint Paul, that news is bad indeed.
 O he hath kept an evil diet long, 140
 And overmuch consumed his royal person.
 'Tis very grievous to be thought upon.
 Where is he? In his bed?

LORD HASTINGS He is.

RICHARD GLOUCESTER
 Go you before and I will follow you.
Exit Hastings

He cannot live, I hope, and must not die 145
 Till George be packed with post-haste up to heaven.
 I'll in to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
 With lies well steeled with weighty arguments.
 And if I fail not in my deep intent,
 Clarence hath not another day to live±± 150
 Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy
 And leave the world for me to bustle in.
 For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
 What though I killed her husband and her father?
 The readiest way to make the wench amends 155
 Is to become her husband and her father,
 The which will I: not all so much for love,
 As for another secret close intent,
 By marrying her, which I must reach unto.
 But yet I run before my horse to market. 160
 Clarence still breathes, Edward still lives and reigns;

When they are gone, then must I count my gains.
Exit