

The Second part of King Henry the Sixth

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SCENE II. Bury St. Edmund's. A room of state.

Enter certain Murderers, hastily

First Murderer

Run to my Lord of Suffolk; let him know
We have dispatch'd the duke, as he commanded.

Second Murderer

O that it were to do! What have we done?
Didst ever hear a man so penitent?

Enter SUFFOLK

First Murderer

Here comes my lord.

SUFFOLK

Now, sirs, have you dispatch'd this thing?

First Murderer

Ay, my good lord, he's dead.

SUFFOLK

Why, that's well said. Go, get you to my house;
I will reward you for this venturous deed.
The king and all the peers are here at hand.
Have you laid fair the bed? Is all things well,
According as I gave directions?

First Murderer

'Tis, my good lord.

SUFFOLK

Away! be gone.

Exeunt Murderers

Sound trumpets. Enter KING HENRY VI, QUEEN MARGARET, CARDINAL, SOMERSET, with Attendants

KING HENRY VI

Go, call our uncle to our presence straight;
Say we intend to try his grace to-day.
If he be guilty, as 'tis published.

SUFFOLK

I'll call him presently, my noble lord.

Exit

KING HENRY VI

Lords, take your places; and, I pray you all,
Proceed no straiter 'gainst our uncle Gloucester
Than from true evidence of good esteem
He be approved in practise culpable.

QUEEN MARGARET

God forbid any malice should prevail,
That faultless may condemn a nobleman!
Pray God he may acquit him of suspicion!

KING HENRY VI

I thank thee, Meg; these words content me much.

Re-enter SUFFOLK

How now! why look'st thou pale? why tremblest thou?
Where is our uncle? what's the matter, Suffolk?

SUFFOLK

Dead in his bed, my lord; Gloucester is dead.

QUEEN MARGARET

Marry, God forbid!

CARDINAL

God's secret judgment: I did dream to-night
The duke was dumb and could not speak a word.

KING HENRY VI swoons

QUEEN MARGARET

How fares my lord? Help, lords! the king is dead.

SOMERSET

Rear up his body; wring him by the nose.

QUEEN MARGARET

Run, go, help, help! O Henry, open thine eyes!

SUFFOLK

He doth revive again: madam, be patient.

KING HENRY VI

O heavenly God!

QUEEN MARGARET

How fares my gracious lord?

SUFFOLK

Comfort, my sovereign! gracious Henry, comfort!

KING HENRY VI

What, doth my Lord of Suffolk comfort me?
Came he right now to sing a raven's note,
Whose dismal tune bereft my vital powers;
And thinks he that the chirping of a wren,
By crying comfort from a hollow breast,
Can chase away the first-conceived sound?
Hide not thy poison with such sugar'd words;
Lay not thy hands on me; forbear, I say;
Their touch affrights me as a serpent's sting.
Thou baleful messenger, out of my sight!
Upon thy eye-balls murderous tyranny
Sits in grim majesty, to fright the world.
Look not upon me, for thine eyes are wounding:
Yet do not go away: come, basilisk,
And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight;
For in the shade of death I shall find joy;
In life but double death, now Gloucester's dead.

QUEEN MARGARET

Why do you rate my Lord of Suffolk thus?
Although the duke was enemy to him,
Yet he most Christian-like laments his death:
And for myself, foe as he was to me,
Might liquid tears or heart-offending groans
Or blood-consuming sighs recall his life,
I would be blind with weeping, sick with groans,
Look pale as primrose with blood-drinking sighs,
And all to have the noble duke alive.
What know I how the world may deem of me?
For it is known we were but hollow friends:
It may be judged I made the duke away;
So shall my name with slander's tongue be wounded,
And princes' courts be fill'd with my reproach.

This get I by his death: ay me, unhappy!
To be a queen, and crown'd with infamy!

KING HENRY VI

Ah, woe is me for Gloucester, wretched man!

QUEEN MARGARET

Be woe for me, more wretched than he is.
What, dost thou turn away and hide thy face?
I am no loathsome leper; look on me.
What! art thou, like the adder, waxen deaf?
Be poisonous too and kill thy forlorn queen.
Is all thy comfort shut in Gloucester's tomb?
Why, then, dame Margaret was ne'er thy joy.
Erect his statue and worship it,
And make my image but an alehouse sign.
Was I for this nigh wreck'd upon the sea
And twice by awkward wind from England's bank
Drove back again unto my native clime?
What boded this, but well forewarning wind
Did seem to say 'Seek not a scorpion's nest,
Nor set no footing on this unkind shore?'
What did I then, but cursed the gentle gusts
And he that loosed them forth their brazen caves:
And bid them blow towards England's blessed shore,
Or turn our stern upon a dreadful rock
Yet AEolus would not be a murderer,
But left that hateful office unto thee:
The pretty-vaulting sea refused to drown me,
Knowing that thou wouldst have me drown'd on shore,
With tears as salt as sea, through thy unkindness:
The splitting rocks cower'd in the sinking sands
And would not dash me with their ragged sides,
Because thy flinty heart, more hard than they,
Might in thy palace perish Margaret.
As far as I could ken thy chalky cliffs,
When from thy shore the tempest beat us back,
I stood upon the hatches in the storm,
And when the dusky sky began to rob
My earnest-gaping sight of thy land's view,
I took a costly jewel from my neck,
A heart it was, bound in with diamonds,
And threw it towards thy land: the sea received it,
And so I wish'd thy body might my heart:
And even with this I lost fair England's view
And bid mine eyes be packing with my heart
And call'd them blind and dusky spectacles,
For losing ken of Albion's wished coast.
How often have I tempted Suffolk's tongue,
The agent of thy foul inconstancy,
To sit and witch me, as Ascanius did
When he to madding Dido would unfold
His father's acts commenced in burning Troy!
Am I not witch'd like her? or thou not false like him?
Ay me, I can no more! die, Margaret!
For Henry weeps that thou dost live so long.

Noise within. Enter WARWICK, SALISBURY, and many Commons

WARWICK

It is reported, mighty sovereign,
That good Duke Humphrey traitorously is murder'd
By Suffolk and the Cardinal Beaufort's means.
The commons, like an angry hive of bees
That want their leader, scatter up and down
And care not who they sting in his revenge.
Myself have calm'd their spleenful mutiny,
Until they hear the order of his death.

KING HENRY VI

That he is dead, good Warwick, 'tis too true;
But how he died God knows, not Henry:
Enter his chamber, view his breathless corpse,
And comment then upon his sudden death.

WARWICK

That shall I do, my liege. Stay, Salisbury,
With the rude multitude till I return.

Exit

KING HENRY VI

O Thou that judgest all things, stay my thoughts,
My thoughts, that labour to persuade my soul
Some violent hands were laid on Humphrey's life!
If my suspect be false, forgive me, God,
For judgment only doth belong to thee.
Fain would I go to chafe his paly lips
With twenty thousand kisses, and to drain
Upon his face an ocean of salt tears,
To tell my love unto his dumb deaf trunk,
And with my fingers feel his hand unfeeling:
But all in vain are these mean obsequies;
And to survey his dead and earthly image,
What were it but to make my sorrow greater?

Re-enter WARWICK and others, bearing GLOUCESTER'S body on a bed

WARWICK

Come hither, gracious sovereign, view this body.

KING HENRY VI

That is to see how deep my grave is made;
For with his soul fled all my worldly solace,
For seeing him I see my life in death.

WARWICK

As surely as my soul intends to live
With that dread King that took our state upon him
To free us from his father's wrathful curse,
I do believe that violent hands were laid
Upon the life of this thrice-famed duke.

SUFFOLK

A dreadful oath, sworn with a solemn tongue!
What instance gives Lord Warwick for his vow?

WARWICK

See how the blood is settled in his face.
Oft have I seen a timely-parted ghost,
Of ashy semblance, meagre, pale and bloodless,
Being all descended to the labouring heart;
Who, in the conflict that it holds with death,
Attracts the same for aidance 'gainst the enemy;
Which with the heart there cools and ne'er returneth
To blush and beautify the cheek again.
But see, his face is black and full of blood,
His eye-balls further out than when he lived,
Staring full ghastly like a strangled man;
His hair uprear'd, his nostrils stretched with struggling;
His hands abroad display'd, as one that grasp'd
And tugg'd for life and was by strength subdued:
Look, on the sheets his hair you see, is sticking;
His well-proportion'd beard made rough and rugged,
Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodged.
It cannot be but he was murder'd here;
The least of all these signs were probable.

SUFFOLK

Why, Warwick, who should do the duke to death?
Myself and Beaufort had him in protection;
And we, I hope, sir, are no murderers.

WARWICK

But both of you were vow'd Duke Humphrey's foes,
And you, forsooth, had the good duke to keep:
'Tis like you would not feast him like a friend;
And 'tis well seen he found an enemy.

QUEEN MARGARET

Then you, belike, suspect these noblemen
As guilty of Duke Humphrey's timeless death.

WARWICK

Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh
 And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
 But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?
 Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest,
 But may imagine how the bird was dead,
 Although the kite soar with unbloodied beak?
 Even so suspicious is this tragedy.

QUEEN MARGARET

Are you the butcher, Suffolk? Where's your knife?
 Is Beaufort term'd a kite? Where are his talons?

SUFFOLK

I wear no knife to slaughter sleeping men;
 But here's a vengeful sword, rusted with ease,
 That shall be scoured in his rancorous heart
 That slanders me with murder's crimson badge.
 Say, if thou darest, proud Lord of Warwick-shire,
 That I am faulty in Duke Humphrey's death.

Exeunt CARDINAL, SOMERSET, and others

WARWICK

What dares not Warwick, if false Suffolk dare him?

QUEEN MARGARET

He dares not calm his contumelious spirit
 Nor cease to be an arrogant controller,
 Though Suffolk dare him twenty thousand times.

WARWICK

Madam, be still; with reverence may I say;
 For every word you speak in his behalf
 Is slander to your royal dignity.

SUFFOLK

Blunt-witted lord, ignoble in demeanor!
 If ever lady wrong'd her lord so much,
 Thy mother took into her blameful bed
 Some stern untutor'd churl, and noble stock
 Was graft with crab-tree slip; whose fruit thou art,
 And never of the Nevils' noble race.

WARWICK

But that the guilt of murder bucklers thee
 And I should rob the deathsman of his fee,
 Quitting thee thereby of ten thousand shames,
 And that my sovereign's presence makes me mild,
 I would, false murderous coward, on thy knee
 Make thee beg pardon for thy passed speech,
 And say it was thy mother that thou meant'st
 That thou thyself was born in bastardy;
 And after all this fearful homage done,
 Give thee thy hire and send thy soul to hell,
 Pernicious blood-sucker of sleeping men!

SUFFOLK

Thou shall be waking well I shed thy blood,
 If from this presence thou darest go with me.

WARWICK

Away even now, or I will drag thee hence:
 Unworthy though thou art, I'll cope with thee
 And do some service to Duke Humphrey's ghost.

Exeunt SUFFOLK and WARWICK

KING HENRY VI

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!
 Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,
 And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel

Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

A noise within

QUEEN MARGARET

What noise is this?

Re-enter SUFFOLK and WARWICK, with their weapons drawn

KING HENRY VI

Why, how now, lords! your wrathful weapons drawn
Here in our presence! dare you be so bold?
Why, what tumultuous clamour have we here?

SUFFOLK

The traitorous Warwick with the men of Bury
Set all upon me, mighty sovereign.

SALISBURY

[To the Commons, entering] Sirs, stand apart;
the king shall know your mind.
Dread lord, the commons send you word by me,
Unless Lord Suffolk straight be done to death,
Or banished fair England's territories,
They will by violence tear him from your palace
And torture him with grievous lingering death.
They say, by him the good Duke Humphrey died;
They say, in him they fear your highness' death;
And mere instinct of love and loyalty,
Free from a stubborn opposite intent,
As being thought to contradict your liking,
Makes them thus forward in his banishment.
They say, in care of your most royal person,
That if your highness should intend to sleep
And charge that no man should disturb your rest
In pain of your dislike or pain of death,
Yet, notwithstanding such a strait edict,
Were there a serpent seen, with forked tongue,
That slily glided towards your majesty,
It were but necessary you were waked,
Lest, being suffer'd in that harmful slumber,
The mortal worm might make the sleep eternal;
And therefore do they cry, though you forbid,
That they will guard you, whether you will or no,
From such fell serpents as false Suffolk is,
With whose evenenomed and fatal sting,
Your loving uncle, twenty times his worth,
They say, is shamefully bereft of life.

Commons

[Within] An answer from the king, my
Lord of Salisbury!

SUFFOLK

'Tis like the commons, rude unpolish'd hinds,
Could send such message to their sovereign:
But you, my lord, were glad to be employ'd,
To show how quaint an orator you are:
But all the honour Salisbury hath won
Is, that he was the lord ambassador
Sent from a sort of tinkers to the king.

Commons

[Within] An answer from the king, or we will all break in!

KING HENRY VI

Go, Salisbury, and tell them all from me.
I thank them for their tender loving care;
And had I not been cited so by them,
Yet did I purpose as they do entreat;
For, sure, my thoughts do hourly prophesy
Mischance unto my state by Suffolk's means:
And therefore, by His majesty I swear,
Whose far unworthy deputy I am,
He shall not breathe infection in this air

But three days longer, on the pain of death.

Exit SALISBURY

QUEEN MARGARET

O Henry, let me plead for gentle Suffolk!

KING HENRY VI

Ungentle queen, to call him gentle Suffolk!
No more, I say: if thou dost plead for him,
Thou wilt but add increase unto my wrath.
Had I but said, I would have kept my word,
But when I swear, it is irrevocable.
If, after three days' space, thou here be'st found
On any ground that I am ruler of,
The world shall not be ransom for thy life.
Come, Warwick, come, good Warwick, go with me;
I have great matters to impart to thee.

Exeunt all but QUEEN MARGARET and SUFFOLK

QUEEN MARGARET

Mischance and sorrow go along with you!
Heart's discontent and sour affliction
Be playfellows to keep you company!
There's two of you; the devil make a third!
And threefold vengeance tend upon your steps!

SUFFOLK

Cease, gentle queen, these execrations,
And let thy Suffolk take his heavy leave.

QUEEN MARGARET

Fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch!
Hast thou not spirit to curse thine enemy?

SUFFOLK

A plague upon them! wherefore should I curse them?
Would curses kill, as doth the mandrake's groan,
I would invent as bitter-searching terms,
As curst, as harsh and horrible to hear,
Deliver'd strongly through my fixed teeth,
With full as many signs of deadly hate,
As lean-faced Envy in her loathsome cave:
My tongue should stumble in mine earnest words;
Mine eyes should sparkle like the beaten flint;
Mine hair be fixed on end, as one distract;
Ay, every joint should seem to curse and ban:
And even now my burthen'd heart would break,
Should I not curse them. Poison be their drink!
Gall, worse than gall, the daintiest that they taste!
Their sweetest shade a grove of cypress trees!
Their chiefest prospect murdering basilisks!
Their softest touch as smart as lizards' sting!
Their music frightful as the serpent's hiss,
And boding screech-owls make the concert full!
All the foul terrors in dark-seated hell--

QUEEN MARGARET

Enough, sweet Suffolk; thou torment'st thyself;
And these dread curses, like the sun 'gainst glass,
Or like an overcharged gun, recoil,
And turn the force of them upon thyself.

SUFFOLK

You bade me ban, and will you bid me leave?
Now, by the ground that I am banish'd from,
Well could I curse away a winter's night,
Though standing naked on a mountain top,
Where biting cold would never let grass grow,
And think it but a minute spent in sport.

QUEEN MARGARET

O, let me entreat thee cease. Give me thy hand,

That I may dew it with my mournful tears;
Nor let the rain of heaven wet this place,
To wash away my woful monuments.
O, could this kiss be printed in thy hand,
That thou mightst think upon these by the seal,
Through whom a thousand sighs are breathed for thee!
So, get thee gone, that I may know my grief;
'Tis but surmised whiles thou art standing by,
As one that surfeits thinking on a want.
I will repeal thee, or, be well assured,
Adventure to be banished myself:
And banished I am, if but from thee.
Go; speak not to me; even now be gone.
O, go not yet! Even thus two friends condemn'd
Embrace and kiss and take ten thousand leaves,
Loather a hundred times to part than die.
Yet now farewell; and farewell life with thee!

SUFFOLK

Thus is poor Suffolk ten times banished;
Once by the king, and three times thrice by thee.
'Tis not the land I care for, wert thou thence;
A wilderness is populous enough,
So Suffolk had thy heavenly company:
For where thou art, there is the world itself,
With every several pleasure in the world,
And where thou art not, desolation.
I can no more: live thou to joy thy life;
Myself no joy in nought but that thou livest.

Enter VAUX

QUEEN MARGARET

Wither goes Vaux so fast? what news, I prithee?

VAUX

To signify unto his majesty
That Cardinal Beaufort is at point of death;
For suddenly a grievous sickness took him,
That makes him gasp and stare and catch the air,
Blaspheming God and cursing men on earth.
Sometimes he talks as if Duke Humphrey's ghost
Were by his side; sometime he calls the king,
And whispers to his pillow, as to him,
The secrets of his overcharged soul;
And I am sent to tell his majesty
That even now he cries aloud for him.

QUEEN MARGARET

Go tell this heavy message to the king.

Exit VAUX

Ay me! what is this world! what news are these!
But wherefore grieve I at an hour's poor loss,
Omitting Suffolk's exile, my soul's treasure?
Why only, Suffolk, mourn I not for thee,
And with the southern clouds contend in tears,
Theirs for the earth's increase, mine for my sorrows?
Now get thee hence: the king, thou know'st, is coming;
If thou be found by me, thou art but dead.

SUFFOLK

If I depart from thee, I cannot live;
And in thy sight to die, what were it else
But like a pleasant slumber in thy lap?
Here could I breathe my soul into the air,
As mild and gentle as the cradle-babe
Dying with mother's dug between its lips:
Where, from thy sight, I should be raging mad,
And cry out for thee to close up mine eyes,
To have thee with thy lips to stop my mouth;
So shouldst thou either turn my flying soul,
Or I should breathe it so into thy body,
And then it lived in sweet Elysium.
To die by thee were but to die in jest;
From thee to die were torture more than death:
O, let me stay, befall what may befall!

QUEEN MARGARET

Away! though parting be a fretful corrosive,
It is applied to a deathful wound.
To France, sweet Suffolk: let me hear from thee;
For wheresoe'er thou art in this world's globe,
I'll have an Iris that shall find thee out.

SUFFOLK

I go.

QUEEN MARGARET

And take my heart with thee.

SUFFOLK

A jewel, lock'd into the wofull'st cask
That ever did contain a thing of worth.
Even as a splitted bark, so sunder we
This way fall I to death.

QUEEN MARGARET

This way for me.

Exeunt severally