

The Life and Death of Richard the Second

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SCENE III. A royal palace.

Enter HENRY BOLINGBROKE, HENRY PERCY, and other Lords

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Can no man tell me 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:
Inquire at London, 'mongst the taverns there,
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,
Takes on the point of honour to support
So dissolute a crew.

HENRY PERCY

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

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

And what said the gallant?

HENRY 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.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

As dissolute as desperate; yet through both
I see some sparks of better hope, which elder years
May happily bring forth. But who comes here?

Enter DUKE OF AUMERLE

DUKE OF AUMERLE

Where is the king?

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

What means our cousin, that he stares and looks
So wildly?

DUKE OF AUMERLE

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

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Withdraw yourselves, and leave us here alone.

Exeunt HENRY PERCY and Lords

What is the matter with our cousin now?

DUKE OF AUMERLE

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

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

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

DUKE OF AUMERLE

Then give me leave that I may turn the key,
That no man enter till my tale be done.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Have thy desire.

DUKE OF YORK

[Within] My liege, beware; look to thyself;
Thou hast a traitor in thy presence there.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Villain, I'll make thee safe.

Drawing

DUKE OF AUMERLE

Stay thy revengeful hand; thou hast no cause to fear.

DUKE OF YORK

[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.

Enter DUKE OF YORK

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

What is the matter, uncle? speak;
Recover breath; tell us how near is danger,
That we may arm us to encounter it.

DUKE OF YORK

Peruse this writing here, and thou shalt know
The treason that my haste forbids me show.

DUKE OF AUMERLE

Remember, as thou read'st, thy promise pass'd:
I do repent me; read not my name there
My heart is not confederate with my hand.

DUKE OF 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 thy pity prove
A serpent that will sting thee to the heart.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

O heinous, strong and bold conspiracy!
O loyal father of a treacherous son!
Thou sheer, immaculate and silver fountain,
From when this stream through muddy passages
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.

DUKE OF YORK

So shall my virtue be his vice's bawd;
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,
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.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

What shrill-voiced suppliant makes this eager cry?

DUCHESS OF YORK

A woman, and thy aunt, great king; 'tis I.
Speak with me, pity me, open the door.
A beggar begs that never begg'd before.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Our scene is alter'd 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.

DUKE OF YORK

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

Enter DUCHESS OF YORK

DUCHESS OF YORK

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

DUKE OF 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.

Kneels

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Rise up, good aunt.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Not yet, I thee beseech:
For ever will I walk 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.

DUKE OF AUMERLE

Unto my mother's prayers I bend my knee.

DUKE OF YORK

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:
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;
Ours of true zeal and deep integrity.
Our prayers do out-pray his; then let them have
That mercy which true prayer ought to have.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Good aunt, stand up.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Nay, do not say, 'stand up;'
Say, 'pardon' first, and afterwards 'stand up.'
And if I were thy nurse, thy tongue to teach,
'Pardon' should be the first word of thy speech.
I never long'd to hear a word till now;
Say 'pardon,' king; let pity teach thee how:
The word is short, but not so short as sweet;
No word like 'pardon' for kings' mouths so meet.

DUKE OF YORK

Speak it in French, king; say, 'pardonne moi.'

DUCHESS OF YORK

Dost thou teach pardon pardon to destroy?
Ah, my sour husband, my hard-hearted lord,

That set'st the word itself against the word!
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,
Pity may move thee 'pardon' to rehearse.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

Good aunt, stand up.

DUCHESS OF YORK

I do not sue to stand;
Pardon is all the suit I have in hand.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

I pardon him, as God shall pardon me.

DUCHESS OF YORK

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

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

With all my heart
I pardon him.

DUCHESS OF YORK

A god on earth thou art.

HENRY BOLINGBROKE

But for our trusty brother-in-law and the abbot,
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,
But I will have them, if I once know where.
Uncle, farewell: and, cousin too, adieu:
Your mother well hath pray'd, and prove you true.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Come, my old son: I pray God make thee new.

