

Richard III

Some Key Exchanges

ACT I, Scene i

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
And now, instead of mounting barded steeds
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;
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time
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,
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 determin'd to prove a villain
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:
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.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here
Clarence comes.

George Plantagenet (Duke of Clarence).
We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). We are the queen's
objects, 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,
I will perform it to enfranchise you.
Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
Touches me deeper than you can imagine.

George Plantagenet (Duke of Clarence).
I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
Well, your imprisonment shall not be long;
Meantime, have patience.

(stage directions). [Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and
Guard]

Richard III (Duke of 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,
If heaven will take the present at our hands.

Richard receives word that his brother King Edward is deathly ill.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).

Go you before, and I will follow you.

[Exit HASTINGS]

He cannot live, I hope; and must not die
Till George be pack'd with post-horse up to heaven.
I'll in, to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
With lies well steel'd with weighty arguments;
And, if I fall not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live:
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 kill'd her husband and her father?
The readiest way to make the wench amends
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:
Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and reigns:
When they are gone, then must I count my gains.

ACT I, Scene ii

Richard stops the funeral procession to try to win and woo Lady Anne and convince her to marry him immediately, even after he has killed her husband and helped her father-in-law be killed. In perhaps the greatest series of insults Lady Anne fights back.

Gentleman. My lord, stand back, and let the coffin pass.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Unmanner'd dog! stand thou, when I command:
Advance thy halbert higher than my breast,
Or, by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot,
And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

Lady Anne. 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.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).

Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

Lady Anne. Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble us not;
For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
Fill'd 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
Open their congeal'd mouths and bleed afresh!
Blush, Blush, thou lump of foul deformity;
For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
Provokes this deluge most unnatural.
O God, which this blood madest, revenge his death!
O earth, which this blood drink'st revenge his death!
Either heaven with lightning strike the
murderer dead,
Or earth, gape open wide and eat him quick,
As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood
Which his hell-govern'd arm hath butchered!

Richard III (Duke of 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:
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). But I know none, and therefore am no beast.

Lady Anne. O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). More wonderful, when angels are so angry.
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,
Of these supposed-evils, to give me leave,
By circumstance, but to acquit myself.

Lady Anne. Vouchsafe, defused infection of a man,
For these known evils, but to give me leave,
By circumstance, to curse thy cursed self.

Richard III (Duke of 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 III (Duke of Gloucester). By such despair, I should
accuse myself.

Lady Anne. And, by despairing, shouldst thou stand
excused;
For doing worthy vengeance on thyself,
Which didst unworthy slaughter upon others.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Say that I slew them not?

Lady Anne. Why, then they are not dead:
But dead they are, and devilish slave, by thee.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). I did not kill your
husband.

Lady Anne. Why, then he is alive.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Nay, he is dead; and slain
by Edward's hand.

Lady Anne. In thy foul throat thou liest: Queen Margaret
saw
Thy murderous falchion smoking in his blood;
The which thou once didst bend against her breast,
But that thy brothers beat aside the point.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). I was provoked by her
slandrous tongue,
which laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders.

Lady Anne. Thou wast provoked by thy bloody mind.
Which never dreamt on aught but butcheries:
Didst thou not kill this king?

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). I grant ye.

Lady Anne. Dost grant me, hedgehog? then, God grant me
too
Thou mayst be damned for that wicked deed!
O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous!

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). The fitter for the King of
heaven, that hath him.

Lady Anne. He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.

Richard III (Duke of 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 III (Duke of Gloucester). Yes, one place else, if you
will hear me name it.

Lady Anne. Some dungeon.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Your bed-chamber.

Lady Anne. I'll rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). So will it, madam till I lie
with you.

Lady Anne. I hope so.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). I know so. But, gentle
Lady Anne,
To leave this keen encounter of our wits,
And fall somewhat 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 art the cause, and most accursed effect.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Your beauty was the
cause of that effect;
Your beauty: which 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,
These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). These eyes could never endure sweet beauty's wreck;
You should not blemish it, if I stood by:
As all the world is cheered by the sun,
So I by that; it is my day, my life.

Lady Anne. Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life!

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Curse not thyself, fair creature thou art both.

Lady Anne. I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). It is a quarrel most unnatural,
To be revenged on him that loveth you.

Lady Anne. It is a quarrel just and reasonable,
To be revenged on him that slew my husband.

Richard III (Duke of 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.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). He lives that loves thee better than he could.

Lady Anne. Name him.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Plantagenet.

Lady Anne. Why, that was he.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). The selfsame name, but one of better nature.

Lady Anne. Where is he?

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Here.
[She spitteth at him]
Why dost thou spit at me?

Lady Anne. Would it were mortal poison, for thy sake!

Richard III (Duke of 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 my eyes.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

Lady Anne. Would they were basilisks, to strike thee dead!

Richard III (Duke of 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 aspect with store of childish drops:
These eyes that never shed remorseful tear,
No, when my father York and Edward wept,
To hear the piteous moan that Rutland made
When black-faced Clifford shook his sword at him;
Nor when thy warlike father, like a child,
Told the sad story of my father's death,
And twenty times made pause to sob and weep,
That all the standers-by had wet their cheeks
Like trees bedash'd with rain: in that sad time
My manly eyes did scorn an humble tear;
And what these sorrows could not thence exhale,
Thy beauty hath, and made them blind with weeping.
I never sued to friend nor enemy;
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 lips such scorn, for they were made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt.
If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword;
Which if thou please to hide in this true bosom.
And let the soul forth that adareth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,
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 provoked me.
Nay, now dispatch; 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward,
But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.
[Here she lets fall the sword]
Take up the sword again, or take up me.

Lady Anne. Arise, dissembler: though I wish thy death,
I will not be the executioner.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Then bid me kill myself,
and I will do it.

Lady Anne. I have already.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
Tush, that was in thy rage:
Speak it again, and, even with the word,
That hand, which, for thy love, did kill thy love,
Shall, for thy love, kill a far truer love;
To both their deaths thou shalt be accessory.

Lady Anne. I would I knew thy heart.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). 'Tis figured in my tongue.

Lady Anne.
I fear me both are false.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
Then never man was true.

Lady Anne. Well, well, put up your sword.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Say, then, my peace is
made.

Lady Anne. That shall you know hereafter.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
But shall I live in hope?

Lady Anne. All men, I hope, live so.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

Lady Anne. To take is not to give.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
Look, how this ring encompasseth finger.
Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart;
Wear both of them, for both of them are thine.
And if thy poor devoted suppliant may
But beg one favour at thy gracious hand,

Thou dost confirm his happiness for ever.

Lady Anne. What is it?

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). That it would please thee
leave these sad designs
To him that hath more cause to be a mourner,
And presently repair to Crosby Place;
Where, after I have solemnly interr'd
At Chertsey monastery this noble king,
And wet his grave with my repentant tears,
I will with all expedient duty see you:
For divers unknown reasons. I beseech you,
Grant me this boon.

Lady Anne. With all my heart; and much it joys me too,
To see you are become so penitent.
Tressel and Berkeley, go along with me.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Bid me farewell.

Having accomplished the impossible Richard is ecstatic!

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).
[Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER]

Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?
Was ever woman in this humour won?
I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.
What! I, that kill'd her husband and his father,
To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
The bleeding witness of her hatred by;
Having God, her conscience, and these bars
against me,
And I nothing to back my suit at all,
But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
Ha!
Hath she forgot already that brave prince,
Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,
Stabb'd in my angry mood at Tewksbury?
A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
Framed in the prodigality of nature,
Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,
The spacious world cannot again afford
And will she yet debase her eyes on me,

That cropp'd the golden prime of this sweet prince,
And made her widow to a woful bed?
On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
On me, that halt and am unshapen thus?
My dukedom to a beggarly denier,
I do mistake my person all this while:
Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,
Myself to be a marvellous proper man.
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass,
And entertain some score or two of tailors,
To study fashions to adorn my body:
Since I am crept in favour with myself,
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.

ACT I, Scene iii

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).

I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl.
The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
I lay unto the grievous charge of others.
Clarence, whom I, indeed, have laid in darkness,
I do bewep to many simple gulls
Namely, to Hastings, Derby, Buckingham;
And say it is the queen and her allies
That stir the king against the duke my brother.
Now, they believe it; and withal whet me
To be revenged on Rivers, Vaughan, Grey:
But then I sigh; and, with a piece of scripture,
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil:
And thus I clothe my naked villany
With old odd ends stolen out of holy writ;
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.
[Enter two Murderers]
But, soft! here come my executioners.
How now, my hardy, stout resolved mates!
Are you now going to dispatch this deed?

ACT III, Scene v

Richard trying to set himself up to look good to the citizens decides to smear his

brother the king's good name, hoping the people will accept his fake piety.

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).

Go, after, after, cousin Buckingham.
The mayor towards Guildhall hies him in all post:
There, at your meet'st advantage of the time,
Infer the bastardy of Edward's children:
Tell them how Edward put to death a citizen,
Only for saying he would make his son
Heir to the crown; meaning indeed his house,
Which, by the sign thereof was termed so.
Moreover, urge his hateful luxury
And bestial appetite in change of lust;
Which stretched to their servants, daughters, wives,
Even where his lustful eye or savage heart,
Without control, listed to make his prey.
Nay, for a need, thus far come near my person:
Tell them, when that my mother went with child
Of that unsatiate Edward, noble York
My princely father then had wars in France
And, by just computation of the time,
Found that the issue was not his begot;
Which well appeared in his lineaments,
Being nothing like the noble duke my father:
But touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off,
Because you know, my lord, my mother lives.

ACT IV, Scene ii

Richard seeks to secure his throne by killing his wife Lady Anne and marrying his brother's George's wife.

Sir William Catesby. My lord?

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester).

Rumour it abroad
That Anne, my wife, is sick and like to die:
I will take order for her keeping close.
Inquire me out some mean-born gentleman,
Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter:
The boy is foolish, and I fear not him.
Look, how thou dream'st! I say again, give out
That Anne my wife is sick and like to die:
About it; for it stands me much upon,
To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me.

[Exit CATESBY]

I must be married to my brother's daughter,
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.
Murder her brothers, and then marry her!
Uncertain way of gain! But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin:
Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye.

ACT V, Scene iii

On the night prior to the final battle

Richard awakens from a prophetic dream.

[KING RICHARD III starts out of his dream]

Richard III (Duke of Gloucester). Give me another horse:

bind up my wounds.

Have mercy, Jesu!—Soft! I did but dream.

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!

The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight.

Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.

What do I fear? myself? there's none else by:

Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.

Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:

Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why:

Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?

Alack. I love myself. Wherefore? for any good

That I myself have done unto myself?

O, no! alas, I rather hate myself

For hateful deeds committed by myself!

I am a villain: yet I lie. I am not.

Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,

And every tongue brings in a several tale,

And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree

Murder, stem murder, in the direst degree;

All several sins, all used in each degree,

Throng to the bar, crying all, Guilty! guilty!

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;

And if I die, no soul shall pity me:

Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself

Find in myself no pity to myself?

Methought the souls of all that I had murder'd

Came to my tent; and every one did threat

To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.