

William Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1592)

ACT I

SCENE I. London. A street.

*Enter RICHARD, Duke of GLOUCESTER, solus
Richard*

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son 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.

Enter CLARENCE, guarded, and BRAKENBURY

Brother, good day; what means this armed guard
That waits upon your Grace?

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

RICHARD
Upon what cause?

CLARENCE
Because my name is George.

RICHARD
Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours;
He should, for that, commit your godfathers:
O, belike his majesty hath some intent
That you shall be new-christen'd in the Tower.
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.
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 such like toys as these
Have moved his Highness to commit me now.

RICHARD

Why, this it is, when men are rul'd by women:
'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower:
My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
That tempers him to this extremity.
Was it not she and that good man of worship,
Anthony Woodville, her brother there,
That made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower,
From whence this present day he is deliver'd?
We are not safe, Clarence; we are not safe!

CLARENCE

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

RICHARD

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:
The jealous o'erworn widow and herself,
Since that our brother dubb'd them gentlewomen.
Are mighty gossips in this monarchy.

BRAKENBURY

I beseech your Graces both to pardon me;

His majesty hath straitly given in charge
That no man shall have private conference-
Of what degree soever- with his brother.

RICHARD

Even so; and please your worship, Brakenbury,
You may partake of any thing we say:
We speak no treason, man: we say the king
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;
And that the Queen's kindred are made gentle-folks:
How say you sir? Can you deny all this?

BRAKENBURY

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

RICHARD

Naught to do with mistress Shore! I tell thee, fellow,
He that doth naught with her, excepting one,
Were best he do it secretly, alone.

BRAKENBURY

What one, my lord?

RICHARD

Her husband, knave: wouldst thou betray me?

BRAKENBURY

I beseech your grace to pardon me, and withal
Forbear your conference with the noble duke.

CLARENCE

We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and will obey.

RICHARD

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,
I will perform it to enfranchise you.
Meantime, this deep disgrace in brotherhood
Touches me deeper than you can imagine.

CLARENCE

I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

RICHARD

Well, your imprisonment shall not be long:
I will deliver you, or else lie for you.
Meantime, have patience.

CLARENCE

I must perforce. Farewell.

Exeunt CLARENCE, BRAKENBURY, and Guard

RICHARD

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.
But who comes here? the new-deliver'd Hastings?