

THE REVENGE OF QUEEN MARGARET
Shakespeare's lost history play, found and restored
by
William Hogeland
(with some notes at the end)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARGARET, Princess of Naples and Anjou, then Queen of
England, then an exile

HENRY VI, King of England

NED, their son, a baby, then a small boy, then an early adolescent

THE EARL OF SUFFOLK, later duke

THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, Henry's uncle and Lord
Protector

ELEANOR, Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke's wife

THE CARDINAL, also Henry's uncle

THE DUKE OF WARWICK

THE DUKE OF YORK

THE DUCHESS OF YORK

EDWARD, eldest adult son of the Duke and Duchess of York,
then King of England

GEORGE, younger adult son of the Duke and Duchess of York,
then Duke of Clarence

RICHARD, youngest adult son of the Duke and Duchess of
York, then Duke of Gloucester, then King of England

RUTLAND, youngest son of the Duke and Duchess of York, a
boy

ELIZABETH GREY, a widow, then Edward's queen

THE EARL OF RIVERS, her brother

LORD GREY, her son by her first marriage

THE YOUNG PRINCE, Elizabeth's elder son by Edward, a boy

YOUNG YORK, Elizabeth's younger son by Edward, a boy

JOAN OF ARC, a leader of French troops

REIGNIER, King of Anjou and Naples, Margaret's father

LEWIS, King of France

LADY BONA, Lewis's sister

JOHN HUME, a priest

THE OTHER LORDS of the English court, attached first to

Henry, then to Edward, then to Richard

THE LADIES of the English court, attached first to Eleanor, then

to Margaret, then to Elizabeth

TWO PETITIONERS

THE SECOND PETITIONER'S MASTER

TWO GAMEKEEPERS

TWO MURDERERS

MESSENGERS, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, COMMONS,

DRUMMERS, TRUMPETERS

ACT ONE

SCENE I-1

France, a battlefield. The Duke of
Warwick and the Duke of York hold
Joan of Arc prisoner.

YORK

A maid, and be so martial?

JOAN

And while I live, I'll ne'er fly from a man!

WARWICK

A goodly prize, my Lord of York.

YORK

Fit for the Devil's grace.

(York starts pulling off Joan's armor.)

JOAN

(to the spirit world)

Now help, you charming spells and periapts,
And you choice spirits that admonish me,
Appear, and aid me in this enterprise!

(On another part of the field, the Earl of
Suffolk holds Margaret prisoner.)

SUFFOLK

Oh, fairest beauty, do not fear nor fly,
For I will touch thee but with reverent hands.
Who art thou? Say, that I may honor thee.

MARGARET

Margaret my name, and daughter to a king,
Regnier, King of Anjou, whosoe'er thou art.

SUFFOLK

An earl I am, and Suffolk am I called.
Be not offended, nature's miracle.
Thou art allotted to be taken by me.

(aside)

Fain would I woo her, yet I dare not speak.

MARGARET

Say, Earl of Suffolk—if thy name be so—
What ransom must I pay before I pass?
For I perceive I am thy prisoner.

SUFFOLK

(aside)

Fond man, remember that thou hast a wife.
Then how can Margaret be thy paramour?

MARGARET

He talks at random. Sure, the man is mad.
Hear ye, captain, are you not at leisure?

SUFFOLK

And yet a dispensation may be had.
(to Margaret)
Madam, I have a secret to reveal. ...

(Joan's hands are tied, her armor on the
ground. York erects a stake and pile
wood beneath it.)

JOAN

My ancient incantations are too weak,
And Hell too strong for me to buckle with.

YORK

See, my Lord of Warwick,
How the ugly wench doth bend her brows,
As if with Circe she would change my shape.

JOAN

Changed to a worser shape thou canst not be.

WARWICK

She hath lived too long to fill the world with words.

YORK

(tying Joan to the stake)

Wicked and vile, and so her death concludes.

(Suffolk still restrains Margaret.)

SUFFOLK

Say, gentle princess. Would you not suppose
Your bondage happy, to be made a queen?

MARGARET

To be a queen in bondage is more vile
Than is a slave in base servility,
For princes should be free.

SUFFOLK

And so shall you,
If happy England's royal king be free.
I'll undertake to make thee Henry's queen,
To put a golden scepter in thy hand
And set a precious crown upon thy head,
If thou wilt condescend to be my—

MARGARET
(breaking the hold)
What?

SUFFOLK
—His love.
How say you, madam, are ye so content?

MARGARET
An if my father please, I am content.

SUFFOLK
Then call our captains and our colors forth!
We'll crave a parley, to confer with him!

(Enter Reignier.)

SUFFOLK
See, Reignier, see thy daughter prisoner.

REIGNIER
Suffolk, what remedy?
I am a soldier and unapt to weep
Or to exclaim on Fortune's fickleness.

SUFFOLK
Consent, and, for thy honor give consent,
Thy daughter shall be wedded to my king.

REIGNIER

Upon condition I may quietly
Enjoy mine own, the country Maine and Anjou,
Free from oppression or the stroke of war,
Margaret shall be Henry's, if he please.

SUFFOLK

I'll over then to England with this news,
And make this marriage to be solemnized.

REIGNIER

(embracing Suffolk)

I do embrace thee, as I would embrace
The Christian prince King Henry, were he here.

(Exit Reignier.

York lights a fire under Joan.)

JOAN

No, misconceived! Joan of Arc hath been
A virgin from her tender infancy,
Whose maiden blood, thus rigorously effused,
Will cry for vengeance at the gates of heaven!

WARWICK

Because she is a maid,
Place barrels of pitch upon the fatal stake,
That so her torture may be shortened.

JOAN

I am with child, ye bloody homicides!
Murder not then the fruit within my womb,
Although ye hale me to a violent death.

YORK

The holy maid with child!
The greatest miracle that e'er ye wrought!

WARWICK

Strumpet, thy words condemn thy brat and thee.
Use no entreaty, for it is in vain.
Over then to England.

(Exeunt Warwick and York.)

JOAN

May never glorious sun reflex his beams
Upon the country where you make abode!
(as she starts to burn)
Oh! Give me leave to curse awhile!

(Suffolk takes Margaret's hand.)

SUFFOLK

But hark you, Margaret,
No princely commendations to my king?

MARGARET

Such commendations as becomes a maid,
A virgin and his servant, say to him.

SUFFOLK

Words sweetly placed and modestly directed,
But madam, I must trouble you again:
No loving token to his majesty?

MARGARET

Yes, my good lord. A pure unspotted heart,
Never yet taint with love, I send the king.

SUFFOLK

And this withal.

(Suffolk and Margaret kiss.)

MARGARET

That for thyself. I will not so presume
To send such peevish tokens to a king.

(They kiss again.)

JOAN

(burning)

... Darkness and the gloomy shade of death
Environ you! Till mischief and despair
Drive you to break your necks or hang yourselves!
Oh, give me leave to curse awhile!
Curse awhile! Curse awhile!

SCENE I-2

England, the court. King Henry on the throne, young, hyper-religious, sickly. Suffolk kneeling before him.

The Cardinal, ally to Suffolk, on one side of the throne; on the other side, back from France, their opponents Warwick and York. At Henry's elbow, the Duke of Gloucester, Lord Protector, with a ceremonial staff. Eleanor, Gloucester's wife, stands aside attended by the Ladies, a body that moves as one in her train. Also in attendance, the Other Lords, a body that, as one, forever checks the political winds.

HENRY

Your wondrous rare description, noble earl,
Of beauteous Margaret hath astonished me.
Her virtues graced with external gifts
Do breed love's settled passions in my heart.

SUFFOLK

And, which is more, she is not so divine,
So full-replete with choice of all delights,
But with as humble lowliness of mind
She is content to be at your command.
Command, I mean, of virtuous chaste intents.

HENRY

And otherwise will Henry ne'er presume.
Therefore, my Lord Protector, give consent
That Margaret may be England's royal queen.

GLOUCESTER

So should I give consent to flatter sin!
You know, my lord, your highness is betrothed
Unto another lady of esteem,
The daughter of the Earl of Armagnac.
How shall we then dispense with that contract,
And not deface your honor with reproach?

(The Other Lords murmur.)

CARDINAL

A poor earl's daughter is unequal odds,
And therefore may be broke without offence.

WARWICK

Why, what, I pray, is Margaret more than that?
Her father is no better than an earl,
Although in glorious titles he excel.

SUFFOLK

(rising)

Yes, lord, her father is a king,
And of such great authority in France
As his alliance will confirm our peace
And keep the Frenchmen in allegiance.

YORK

And so the Earl of Armagnac may do.
Beside, his wealth doth warrant a liberal dower.

CARDINAL

A dower, my lords! Disgrace not so your king,
That he should be so abject, base and poor,
To choose for wealth and not for perfect love.

SUFFOLK

Henry is able to enrich his queen
And not seek a queen to make him rich.

Not whom we will, but whom his grace affects,
Must be companion of his nuptial bed.

HENRY

Alas, my years are young,
And fitter is my study and my books
Than wanton dalliance with a paramour.
No sooner was I crept out of my cradle
But I was made a king at nine months old.
Whether it be through force of your report,
My noble Lord of Suffolk, or for that
My tender youth was never yet attaint
With any passion of inflaming love,
I cannot tell. But this I am assured:
I feel such sharp dissension in my breast,
Such fierce alarums both of hope and fear,
As I am sick with working of my thoughts.
And like as rigor of tempestuous gusts
Provokes the mightiest hulk against the tide,
So am I driven by breath of her renown
Either to suffer shipwreck or arrive
Where I may have fruition of her love.
And you, good uncle, banish all offence,
Agree to any covenants.

SUFFOLK

The happiest gift that ever marquess gave,
The fairest queen that ever king received!

(Enter Margaret. She kneels.)

HENRY

(going to her and kneeling)

Welcome, Queen Margaret.

I can express no kinder sign of love

Than this kind kiss.

(kisses her chastely)

Oh, Lord, that lends me life,

Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!

MARGARET

Great King of England and my gracious lord,

The mutual conference that my mind hath had,

By day, by night, waking and in my dreams,

In courtly company or at my beads,

With you, mine alder-liefest sovereign,

Makes me the bolder to salute my king

With ruder terms, such as my wit affords

And over-joy of heart doth minister.

HENRY

Her sight did ravish, but her grace in speech!

Her words y-clad with wisdom's majesty

Makes me from wondering fall to weeping joys.

Such is the fulness of my heart's content.

(leading her to a seat beside the throne)

Lords, with one cheerful voice welcome my love!

ALL
Long live Queen Margaret, England's happiness!

MARGARET
We thank you all.

(Henry and Margaret sit.)

SUFFOLK
(handing Gloucester papers)
My Lord Protector, so it please your grace,
Here are the articles of contracted peace
Between our sovereign and Regnier of Anjou.

GLOUCESTER
(reading)
“Imprimis, it is agreed between the Regnier, King of Anjou
and Naples, and the Earl of Suffolk, ambassador for Henry
King of England, that the said Henry shall espouse the
Lady Margaret, daughter unto Reignier, and crown her
Queen of England ere the thirtieth of May next ensuing.
Item, it is further agreed between them that the duchy of
Anjou and the county of Maine shall be released and
delivered over to the king her father” —

(Gloucester breaks off. Warwick, York,
and Eleanor react.)

HENRY

Uncle, how now.

GLOUCESTER

Pardon me, gracious lord:
Some sudden qualm hath struck me at the heart
And dimmed mine eyes, that I can read no further.

HENRY

My uncle the Cardinal, I pray, read on.

CARDINAL

“Item, It is further agreed between them, that the duchies of
Anjou and Maine shall be released and delivered over to
the king her father, and she sent over of the King of
England’s own proper cost and charges, without having any
dowry.”

HENRY

They please us well. Earl of Suffolk:
We here create thee the first Duke of Suffolk.

SUFFOLK

(bowing to Henry; aside, to the Cardinal)
Margaret shall now be queen and rule the king,

CARDINAL

(to Suffolk, aside)

And we will rule both her, the king, and realm.

HENRY

Cousin of York,

We here discharge your grace from being regent

In those parts of France, Anjou and Maine.

WARWICK

(to York, aside.)

Be still awhile.

YORK

(to Warwick, aside.)

Till time do serve.

HENRY

We thank you all for the great favor done

In entertainment to my princely queen.

Come, let us in, and with all speed provide

To see her coronation be performed.

(Exeunt Henry, Margaret, Suffolk, and
the Other Lords, leaving Gloucester,
Warwick, York, the Cardinal, Eleanor,
and the Ladies.)

GLOUCESTER

Oh, peers of England, shameful is this league,
Fatal this marriage, cancelling your fame,
Defacing monuments of conquered France,
Undoing all, as all had never been!
Have you yourselves, brave York and victorious Warwick,
Received deep scars in France and Normandy?

WARWICK

Anjou and Maine! Myself did win them both,
Those provinces these arms of mine did conquer.
And are the cities, that I got with wounds,
Delivered up again with peaceful words?

YORK

For Suffolk's duke, may he be suffocate,
That dims the honor of this warlike isle!
Our King Henry gives away his own,
To match with her that brings no vantages.

GLOUCESTER

She should have stayed in France, and starved in France,
Before—

CARDINAL

My Lord of Gloucester, now ye grow too hot.
It was the pleasure of my lord the King.

GLOUCESTER

Lordings, farewell, and say, when I am gone,
I prophesied France will be lost ere long.

(Exeunt all.)

SCENE I-3

A street. Petitioners have gathered to
present written grievances.

FIRST PETITIONER

My masters, let's stand close: my Lord Protector will come
this way by and by, and then we may deliver our
supplications in the quill.

SECOND PETITIONER

Marry, the Lord protect him, for he's a good man! Jesu
bless him!

(Enter Margaret and Suffolk, a Servant
trailing behind.)

FIRST PETITIONER

Here he comes, methinks, and the queen with him. I'll be
the first, sure.

SECOND PETITIONER

Come back, fool. This is the Duke of Suffolk, and not my Lord Protector.

SUFFOLK

(taking the petition)

How now, fellow. Wouldst anything with me?

MARGARET

“To my Lord Protector.”

Are your supplications to the Duke of Gloucester?

SUFFOLK

What’s yours? What’s here?

SECOND PETITIONER

Against my master, for saying that the Duke of York was rightful heir to the crown.

MARGARET

What sayst thou? Did the Duke of York say he was rightful heir to the crown?

SECOND PETITIONER

My master said that he was, and that the king was an usurper.

SUFFOLK

(To the Servant)

Take this fellow in, and send for his master with a
pursuivant presently: we'll hear more of your matter before
the King.

MARGARET

(tearing up the petitions)

Away, base cullions. Suffolk, let them go.

(Exeunt Servant and Petitioners,
leaving Margaret and Suffolk.)

MARGARET

What, shall King Henry be a pupil still
Under the surly Gloucester's governance?
Am I a queen in title and in style,
And must be made a subject to a duke?
I thought King Henry had resembled thee
In courage, courtship and proportion.
But all his mind is bent to holiness,
To number Ave Marys on his beads.
I would the college of the cardinals
Would choose him Pope, and carry him to Rome,
And set the triple crown upon his head.
That were a state fit for his holiness.

SUFFOLK

Madam, be patient. As I was cause
Your highness came to England, so will I
In England work your grace's full content.

MARGARET

Beside the haughty Protector have we the Cardinal,
Warwick, and York, and not the least of these
But can do more in England than the king.

SUFFOLK

Madam, list to me:
Although we fancy not the Cardinal,
Yet must we join with him,
Till we have brought Gloucester in disgrace.
As for the Duke of York, this late complaint
Will make but little for his benefit.

MARGARET

Yet not all these lords do vex me half so much
As that proud Dame Eleanor, the Lord Protector's wife.
She sweeps it through the court with troops of ladies,
More like an empress than a duke's wife.
Strangers in court do take her for the Queen.
She bears a duke's revenues on her back,
And in her heart she scorns our poverty.
Shall I not live to be avenged on her?

SUFFOLK

Madam, myself have limed a bush for her,
So, one by one, we'll weed them all at last,
And you yourself shall steer the happy helm.

SCENE I-4

Gloucester's house. Eleanor and
Gloucester alone.

ELEANOR

Why are thine eyes fixed to the sullen earth,
Gazing on that which seems to dim thy sight?
What seest thou there? King Henry's diadem,
Enchased with all the honors of the world?
Put forth thy hand, reach at the glorious gold.
What, is too short? I'll lengthen it with mine,
And, having both together heaved it up,
We'll both together lift our heads to heaven,
And never more abase our sight so low
As to vouchsafe one glance unto the ground.

GLOUCESTER

Oh, Eleanor, sweet Nell, if thou dost love thy lord,
Banish the canker of ambitious thoughts,
And may that thought, when I imagine ill

Against my king and nephew, virtuous Henry,
Be my last breathing in this mortal world.

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER

I summon your grace to his majesty's parliament,
Holden at Bury the first of this next month.

GLOUCESTER

And my consent ne'er asked herein before.
This is close dealing. Well, I will be there.
Come, Nell, thou wilt ride with us?

ELEANOR

Yes, my good lord, I'll follow presently.

(Exeunt Gloucester and Messenger,
leaving Eleanor alone.)

ELEANOR

Follow I must. I cannot go before,
While Gloucester bears this base and humble mind.
Were I a man, a duke, and next of blood,
I would remove these tedious stumbling-blocks
And smooth my way upon their headless necks.
And being a woman, I will not be slack
To play my part in Fortune's pageant.
(calling, off)

Where are you, there? John Hume! Nay, fear not, man,
We are alone, here's none but thee and I.

(Enter John Hume, a priest.)

HUME

Jesus preserve Your Royal Majesty!

ELEANOR

What sayst thou? Majesty! I am but Grace.

HUME

But by the grace of God and Hume's advice,
Your Grace's title shall be multiplied.

ELEANOR

What sayst thou, man? Hast thou as yet conferred
With the cunning witch and with the conjurer?
And will they undertake to do me good?

HUME

This they have promised: to show Your Highness
A spirit raised from depth of underground
That shall make answer to such questions
As by Your Grace shall be propounded him.

ELEANOR

We'll see these things effected to the full.

(giving him money)

Here, take this reward. Make merry, man,

With thy confederates in this weighty cause.

(Exit Eleanor, leaving Hume alone.)

HUME

Dame Eleanor gives gold to bring the witch.

Yet have I gold flies from another coast,

I dare not say, from the rich Cardinal

And from the great and new-made Duke of Suffolk.

They, knowing Dame Eleanor's aspiring humor,

Have hired me to undermine the Duchess

And buzz these conjurations in her brain.

And her attainture will be Gloucester's fall.

Sort how it will, I shall have gold for all.

SCENE I-5

The court. Henry on the throne.

Margaret is seated beside him, visibly pregnant, cooling herself with a hand-held fan. Gloucester by their side.

Suffolk and the Cardinal vs. York and Warwick. Eleanor standing aside with

the Ladies. The Other Lords also in
attendance.

WARWICK

(to Henry)

York is the worthier.

CARDINAL

Ambitious Warwick, let thy betters speak!

YORK

(to Henry)

If I have ill demeaned myself in France,
Then let me be denied the regentship!

GLOUCESTER

Peace! And show some reason, Cardinal,
Why another should be preferred in this.

MARGARET

(rising)

Because the king, forsooth, will have it so.

GLOUCESTER

Madam, the king is old enough himself
To give his censure. These are no women's matters.

MARGARET

If he be old enough, what needs your grace
To be protector of his excellence?

GLOUCESTER

Madam, I am Protector of the realm.
And at his pleasure will resign my place.

SUFFOLK

Resign it then, and leave thine insolence.
Since thou wert king—as who is king but thou?—
The commonwealth hath daily run to wreck.

CARDINAL

(to Gloucester)

The commons hast thou racked. The clergy's bags
Are lank and lean with thy extortions.

SUFFOLK

Thy sumptuous buildings, and thy wife's attire,
Have cost a mass of public treasury.

MARGARET

(moving toward Eleanor and the Ladies)

Thy sale of offices and towns in France,
If they were known, as the suspect is great,
Would make thee quickly hop without thy head.

GLOUCESTER

As for your spiteful false objections,
Prove them, and I lie open to the law.

(Margaret drops her fan.)

MARGARET

Give me my fan. What, minion! Can ye not?

(She boxes Eleanor's ears.)

MARGARET

I cry you mercy, madam, was it you?

ELEANOR

Was't I! Yea, I it was, proud Frenchwoman.
Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in your face!

HENRY

Sweet aunt, be quiet, 'twas against her will.

ELEANOR

Against her will! Good king, look to it in time:
She'll hamper thee and dandle thee like a baby.
Though in this place most master wear no breeches,
She shall not strike Dame Eleanor unrevenged.

(Exit Eleanor.)

GLOUCESTER

But to the matter that we have in hand,
I say, my sovereign, York is meetest man
To be your regent in the realm of France.

SUFFOLK

Before we make election, give me leave
To show some reason, of no little force,
That York is most unmeet of any man.

(Enter Soldiers with the Second
Petitioner and his Master.)

SUFFOLK

Because here is a man accused of treason.
Pray God the Duke of York excuse himself.

YORK

Doth any one accuse York for a traitor?

HENRY

What meanst thou, Suffolk? Tell me, what are these?

SUFFOLK

Please it your majesty, this is the man
That doth accuse his master of high treason.
His words were these: that Richard, Duke of York,

Was rightful heir unto the English crown
And that your majesty was a usurper.

HENRY

Say, man, were these thy words?

MASTER

An't shall please your majesty, I never said nor thought any
such matter. God is my witness, I am falsely accused by the
villain.

SECOND PETITIONER

By these ten bones, my lords, he did speak them to me, in
the garret one night as we were scouring my Lord of
York's armor.

YORK

Base dunghill villain and mechanical,
I'll have thy head for this thy traitor's speech!
I do beseech your royal majesty,
Let him have all the rigor of the law.

MASTER

I beseech Your Majesty, do not cast away an honest man
for a villain's accusation.

HENRY

Uncle, what shall we say to this in law?

GLOUCESTER

This doom, my lord, if I may judge:
Let another man be regent over the French,
Because in York this breeds suspicion.

YORK

(to Warwick, aside)

Watch thou, and wake when others be asleep,
And force perforce we'll make him yield the crown,
Whose bookish rule hath pulled fair England down.

(Warwick doesn't respond.)

GLOUCESTER

Away with them, to prison.

(Exeunt Soldiers with the Master and
the Second Petitioner.)

HENRY

The winds grow high. So do your stomachs, lords.
How irksome is this music to my heart!
When such strings jar, what hope of harmony?

(Enter Soldiers, holding Eleanor and
Hume prisoner.)

MARGARET

Gloucester, see here the tainture of thy nest,
And look thyself be faultless, thou wert best!

HUME

A sort of naughty persons, lewdly bent,
Under the countenance and confederacy
Of Lady Eleanor, the Protector's wife,
The ringleader and head of all this rout,
Have practiced dangerously against your state.

HENRY

Oh, God, what mischiefs work the wicked ones,
Heaping confusion on their own heads thereby.

GLOUCESTER

Noble she is. But if she have forgot
Honor and virtue, and conversed with such
As, like to pitch, defile nobility,
I banish her my bed and company
And give her as a prey to law and shame
That hath dishonored Gloucester's honest name.

HENRY

Stand forth, Dame Eleanor, Gloucester's wife.
In sight of God and us, your guilt is great.
Receive the sentence of the law for sins
Such as by God's book are adjudged to death.

You, madam, for you are nobly born,
Despoiled of your honor in your life,
Shall, after three days' open penance done,
Live in your country here in banishment.

ELEANOR

Welcome were banishment. Welcome were my death.

(Exeunt Hume and Soldiers with
Eleanor. The Ladies instantly arrange
themselves in attendance on Margaret.)

GLOUCESTER

I beseech your Majesty give me leave to go.
Sorrow would solace, and mine age would ease.

MARGARET

I see no reason why a king of years
Should be to be protected like a child.
God and King Henry govern England's realm.

HENRY

Stay, uncle, Duke of Gloucester. Ere thou go,
Give up thy staff. Henry will to himself
Protector be, and God shall be my hope,
My stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet.
And go in peace, no less beloved
Than when thou wert Protector to thy king.

MARGARET

Give up your staff, sir, and the King his realm.

GLOUCESTER

My staff?

(laying it down)

Here, noble Henry, is my staff.

As willingly do I the same resign

As e'er thy father Henry made it mine,

And even as willingly at thy feet I leave it

As others would ambitiously receive it.

(Exit Gloucester.)

MARGARET

(taking up the staff)

Why, now is Henry king and Margaret queen!

Two pulls at once:

His lady banished and a limb lopped off,

This staff of honor raught.

(offering it to Henry)

Let it stand

Where it best fits to be, in Henry's hand.

SCENE I-6

A street. The Commons jeer as
Eleanor, guarded by a Soldier, walks
barefoot, a sign on her back reading
“TRAITOR.” Enter Gloucester.

ELEANOR

Come you, my lord, to see my open shame?
Ah, in thy closet pent up, rue my shame,
And ban thine enemies, both mine and thine!

GLOUCESTER

Be patient, gentle Eleanor. Forget this grief.

ELEANOR

Ah, Gloucester, teach me to forget myself!
Dark shall be my light and night my day,
To think upon my pomp shall be my hell.
Sometime I'll say, I am Gloucester's wife,
And he a prince and ruler of the land,
Yet so he ruled and such a prince he was
As he stood by whilst I, his forlorn duchess,
Was made a wonder and a pointing-stock
To every idle rascal follower.
But be thou mild and blush not at my shame,
Nor stir at nothing till the axe of death
Hang over thee, as, sure, it shortly will,
For Suffolk, he that can do all in all

With her that hateth thee and hates us all,
And York and the impious Cardinal, that false priest,
Have all limed bushes to betray thy wings,
And, fly thou how thou canst, they'll tangle thee.

GLOUCESTER

Ah, Eleanor, forbear! Thou aimest all awry.
I must offend before I be attainted.
Thy greatest help is quiet, gentle Eleanor.

ELEANOR

(to the Soldier)

Go, lead the way. I long to see my prison.

SCENE I-7

The court, a year later. Henry on the throne. Margaret, no longer pregnant, beside him, holding her baby: Ned, heir to the crown. Suffolk and the Cardinal vs. York and Warwick; the Other Lords and the Ladies in attendance.

HENRY

I muse my lord of Gloucester is not come.
Tis not his wont to be the hindmost man,
Whate'er occasion keeps him from us now.

MARGARET

Can you not see, or will you not observe,
How insolent of late he is become,
How proud, how peremptory, and unlike himself?
Small curs are not regarded when they grin,
But great men tremble when the lion roars,
And Gloucester is no little man in England.

SUFFOLK

(to Margaret)

Well hath your Highness seen into this duke.

CARDINAL

Did he not, contrary to form of law,
Devise strange deaths for small offenses done?

YORK

And did he not, in his protectorship,
Levy great sums of money through the realm
For soldiers' pay in France, and never sent it,
By means whereof the towns each day revolted?

(Warwick moves away from York.)

MARGARET

The reverent care I bear unto my lord
Made me collect these dangers in the Duke.
If it be fond, call it a woman's fear.
Suffolk, York, Cardinal, Warwick,
Reprove my allegation if you can,
Or else conclude my words effectual.

HENRY

My lords at once: the care you have of us
To mow down thorns that would annoy our foot
Is worthy praise, but, shall I speak my conscience,
Our kinsman Gloucester is as innocent
From meaning treason to our royal person
As is the sucking lamb or harmless dove.

MARGARET

Ah, what's more dangerous than this fond affiance?
Who cannot steal a shape that means deceit?
Take heed, my lord: the welfare of us all
Hangs on the cutting short that fraudulent man.

(Enter Gloucester, staffless and aged.)

GLOUCESTER

Pardon, my liege, that I have stayed so long.

SUFFOLK

Nay, Gloucester, know that thou art come too soon,
Unless thou wert more loyal than thou art . . .

(Enter Soldiers.)

SUFFOLK

I do arrest thee of high treason here!

(Warwick reacts.)

GLOUCESTER

Who can accuse me? Wherein am I guilty?

CARDINAL

Tis thought, my lord, that you took bribes of France
And, being Protector, stayed the soldiers' pay,
By means whereof his Highness hath lost France.

GLOUCESTER

Is it but thought so? What are they that think it?

YORK

In your protectorship, you did devise
Strange tortures for offenders, never heard of,
That England was defamed by tyranny.

GLOUCESTER

Why, 'tis well known that whiles I was Protector,
Pity was all the fault that was in me.

SUFFOLK

I do arrest you in his Highness' name,
And here commit you to my Lord Cardinal
To keep until your further time of trial.

HENRY

My lord of Gloucester, 'tis my special hope
That you will clear yourself from all suspense.
My conscience tells me you are innocent.

GLOUCESTER

I know their complot is to have my life--
and you, my sovereign lady, with the rest!

CARDINAL

My liege, his railing is intolerable.

SUFFOLK

Hath he not twit our sovereign lady here
With ignominious words, though clerkly couched?

MARGARET

But I can give the loser leave to chide.

GLOUCESTER

Beshrew the winners, for they played me false,
And well such losers may have leave to speak.

YORK

He'll wrest the sense and hold us here all day.
Lord Cardinal, he is your prisoner.

CARDINAL

(to Soldiers)

Sirs, take away the Duke, and guard him sure.

GLOUCESTER

Ah, that my fear were false, ah, that it were!
For, good King Henry, thy decay I fear.

(Exeunt Soldiers with Gloucester.)

HENRY

(rising)

My lords, what to your wisdoms seemeth best
Do, or undo, as if ourself were here.

MARGARET

What, will your Highness leave the Parliament?

HENRY

Ay, Margaret. My heart is drowned with grief,
Whose flood begins to flow within mine eyes,
My body round engirt with misery.

(Warwick goes to Henry.)

HENRY

(leaning on Warwick)

Ah, Uncle Gloucester, in thy face I see
The map of honor, truth, and loyalty.
His fortunes I will weep and, 'twixt each groan,
Say "Who's a traitor, Gloucester he is none."

(At a sign from Margaret, one of
the Ladies takes Ned. Exeunt
Henry, Warwick, and the Other
Lords, the Ladies following them,
leaving Margaret, Suffolk, the
Cardinal, and York.)

MARGARET

Believe me, lords, were none more wise than I,
And yet herein I judge mine own wit good,
This Gloucester should be quickly rid the world,
To rid us from the fear we have of him.

CARDINAL

That he should die is worthy policy,
But yet we want a color for his death.
Tis meet he be condemned by course of law.

SUFFOLK

But in my mind, that were no policy.
The King will labor still to save his life,
The Commons haply rise to save his life,
And yet we have but trivial argument,
More than mistrust, that shows him worthy death.

YORK

So that, by this, you would not have him die.

SUFFOLK

Ah, York, no man alive so fain as I!
And do not stand on quilllets how to slay him,
Be it by gins, by snares, by subtlety,
Sleeping or waking. Tis no matter how,
So he be dead.

MARGARET

Thrice-noble Suffolk, tis resolutely spoke.

SUFFOLK

To preserve my sovereign from his foe,
Say but the word and I will be his priest.

CARDINAL

Say you consent and censure well the deed,
And I'll provide his executioner.
I tender so the safety of my liege.

SUFFOLK

Here is my hand. The deed is worthy doing.

MARGARET

And so say I.

YORK

And I.

(ignoring Margaret)

And now we three have spoke it,
It skills not greatly who impugns our doom.

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER

Great lords, from Ireland am I come amain
To signify that rebels there are up
And put the Englishmen unto the sword.
Send succors, lords, and stop the rage betime,
Before the wound do grow uncurable,
For, being green, there is great hope of help.

CARDINAL

My lord of York,
To Ireland will you lead a band of men,
Collected choicely, from each county some,
And try your hap against the Irishmen?

YORK

I will, my lord, so please his Majesty.

MARGARET

Why, our authority is his consent,
And what we do establish he confirms.

SUFFOLK

Then, noble York, take thou this task in hand.

YORK

I am content. Provide me soldiers, lords,
Whiles I take order for mine own affairs.

SUFFOLK

A charge, Lord York, that I will see performed.
But now return we to the false Duke of Gloucester.

CARDINAL

No more of him, for I will deal with him,
That henceforth he shall trouble us no more.
And so break off: the day is almost spent.
Lord Suffolk, you and I must talk of that event.

(Exeunt Suffolk, the Cardinal,
Margaret, and the Messenger, leaving
York alone.)

YORK

Well, nobles, well, 'tis politicly done
To send me packing with an host of men.
Twas men I lacked, and you will give them me.
Whiles I in Ireland nourish a mighty band,
I will stir up in England some black storm
Shall blow ten thousand souls to heaven or hell,
And this fell tempest shall not cease to rage
Until the golden circuit on my head,
Like to the glorious sun's transparent beams,
Do calm the fury of this mad-bred flaw.
For, Gloucester being dead, as he shall be,
And Henry put apart, the next for me!

SCENE I-8

Gloucester's house, Henry, Margaret,
Suffolk, and the Cardinal arriving.

HENRY

Go, call our uncle to our presence straight.
Say we intend to try his Grace today
If he be guilty, as 'tis published.

(Exit Suffolk.)

MARGARET

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

HENRY

I thank thee, Meg. These words content me much.

(Reenter Suffolk.)

HENRY

How now? Why lookst thou pale? Why tremblest thou?
Where is our uncle? What's the matter, Suffolk?

SUFFOLK

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

MARGARET

Marry, God forfend!

CARDINAL

God's secret judgment! I did dream tonight
The Duke was dumb and could not speak a word!

(Henry keels over.)

MARGARET

How fares my lord? Help, lords, the King is dead!
Run, go, help, help! Oh, Henry, ope thine eyes!

SUFFOLK

He doth revive again. Madam, be patient.

HENRY

Oh, heavenly God!

MARGARET

How fares my gracious lord?

SUFFOLK

Comfort, my sovereign! Gracious Henry, comfort!

HENRY

What, doth my lord of Suffolk comfort me?
And thinks he that the chirping of a wren,
By crying comfort from a hollow breast,
Can chase away the first-conceived sound?

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.
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 filled with my reproach.
This get I by his death. Ay me, unhappy,
To be a queen and crowned with infamy!

HENRY

Ah, woe is me for Gloucester, wretched man!

MARGARET

Ah, wretched man, would I had died a maid
And never seen thee, never borne thee son!
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.
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.
Ay me, I can no more. Die, Margaret,
For Henry weeps that thou dost live so long.

(Shouting by the Commons, off. Enter Warwick.)

WARWICK

It is reported, mighty sovereign,
That good Lord Gloucester traitorously is murdered
By Suffolk and the Cardinal's means.
The Commons, like an angry hive of bees,
Care not who they sting in his revenge.
Myself have calmed their spleenful mutiny,
Until they hear the order of his death.

HENRY

That he is dead, good Warwick, tis too true,
But how he died God knows, not Henry.
View his breathless corpse,
And comment then upon his sudden death.

(Enter Soldiers with Gloucester's corpse.)

WARWICK

But see, his face is black and full of blood,
His eyeballs further out than when he lived,
Staring full ghastly, like a strangled man,
It cannot be but he was murdered here.

MARGARET

Then you, belike, suspect these noblemen
As guilty of Lord Gloucester's timeless death.
Are you the butcher, Suffolk? Where's your knife?
Is the Cardinal termed a kite? Where are his talons?

SUFFOLK

Say, if thou dar'st, proud lord of Warwickshire,
That I am faulty in Duke Gloucester's death.

WARWICK

What dares not Warwick, if false Suffolk dare him?

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.

(More shouting from the Commons,
off. Enter the Other Lords.)

FIRST OTHER LORD

(to the Commons, off)

Sirs, stand apart! The King shall know your mind!

SECOND OTHER LORD

Dread lord, the Commons send you word by me,
Unless Lord Suffolk straight be done to death—

FIRST OTHER LORD

—Or banished from fair England's territories
They will by violence tear him from your palace
And torture him with grievous lingering death—

SECOND OTHER LORD

They say by him the Duke of Gloucester died!

FIRST OTHER LORD

They say in him they fear your Highness' death!

(The Cardinal, in visible consternation,
moves away from Suffolk.)

SUFFOLK

Tis like the Commons, rude unpolished hinds,
Could send such message to their sovereign.

HENRY

Go, and tell them all from me,
I thank them for their tender loving care.
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.

(Exeunt the Other Lords.)

MARGARET

Oh, Henry, let me plead for gentle Suffolk!

HENRY

Ungentle queen to call him gentle Suffolk.

(to Suffolk)

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 Henry and Warwick, the
Cardinal following, leaving Margaret
and Suffolk.)

MARGARET

(calling after them)

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.

MARGARET

Oh, give me leave to curse awhile!
Fie, coward woman and soft-hearted wretch,
Hast thou not spirit to curse thine enemies?

SUFFOLK

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' stings—

MARGARET

Oh, let me entreat thee cease! Give me thy hand,
That I may dew it with my mournful tears.
Oh, 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.
Go, speak not to me. Even now be gone!
Oh, go not yet!
Yet now farewell. And farewell life with thee.

SUFFOLK

Tis not the land I care for, wert thou thence.
A wilderness is populous enough,
So Suffolk had thy heavenly company.

I can no more. Live thou to joy thy life;
Myself no joy in naught but that thou liv'st.

(Enter Messenger)

MARGARET

What news, I prithee?

MESSENGER

To signify unto his Majesty,
That the Cardinal 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.

MARGARET

Go, tell this heavy message to the king.

(Exit Messenger.)

MARGARET

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.

MARGARET

And take my heart with thee.

SUFFOLK

This way fall I—to death.

(Exit Suffolk)

MARGARET

(sinking to the ground)

This way for me.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE II-1

The court, a few years later. The
severed head of Suffolk on a table.
Margaret observing it, with Ned, now a
small boy, and the Ladies.

Henry on the throne, the Other Lords
giving him news.

FIRST OTHER LORD

Please it your Grace to be advertised—!

SECOND OTHER LORD

—The Duke of York is newly come from Ireland—!

FIRST OTHER LORD

—And with a puissant and a mighty power
Of gallowglasses and stout kerns,
Is marching hitherward in proud array!

MARGARET

(aside)

Oft have I heard that grief softens the mind
And makes it fearful and degenerate.

HENRY

(to Margaret)

How now, madam?

Still lamenting and mourning for Suffolk's death?

MARGARET

"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."

THE OTHER LORDS

Linger not, my lord!

MARGARET

"This way fall I, to death" . . . "This way for me"

HENRY

(rising)

Come, Margaret, Ned. God, our hope, will succor us.

MARGARET

My hope is gone, now Suffolk is deceased.

THE OTHER LORDS

Away! Take horse!

MARGARET

Think therefore on revenge, and cease to weep. ...

And while I live, I'll ne'er fly from a man!

(to Henry)

We will not fly, but to our enemies' throats!

(Exeunt Margaret and Ned, followed
by Henry and the Other Lords.

Exeunt the Ladies, in haste, the other
way.)

SCENE II-2

The countryside. York addressing his
Officers.

YORK

From Ireland thus comes York to claim his right,

And pluck the crown from feeble Henry's head.

Ring, bells, aloud! Burn, bonfires, clear and bright

To entertain great England's lawful king!

Now give me leave to satisfy myself

In craving your opinion of my title,

Which is infallible, to England's crown.

FIRST OFFICER

My lord, I long to hear it at full.

YORK

Then thus:

Edward the Third, my lords, had seven sons:
The first, Edward the Black Prince, Prince of Wales;
The second, William of Hatfield; and the third,
Lionel, Duke of Clarence; next to whom
Was John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster;
The fifth was Edmund Langley, Duke of York;
The sixth was Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester;
William of Windsor was the seventh and last.
Edward the Black Prince died before his father
And left behind him Richard, his only son,
Who, after Edward the Third's death, reigned as king
Till Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster,
The eldest son and heir of John of Gaunt,
Crowned by the name of Henry the Fourth,
Seized on the realm, deposed the rightful king,
Sent his poor queen to France, from whence she came,
And him to Pomfret, where, as all you know,
Harmless Richard was murdered traitorously.

SECOND OFFICER

The Duke hath told the truth.
Thus got the house of Lancaster the crown.

THIRD OFFICER

But William of Hatfield died without an heir.

YORK

The third son, Duke of Clarence, from whose line
I claim the crown, had issue, Philippa, a daughter,
Who married Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March.
Edmund had issue, Roger, Earl of March.
Roger had issue: Edmund, Anne, and Eleanor.
His eldest sister, Anne,
My mother, being heir unto the crown,
Married Richard, Earl of Cambridge, who was son
To Edmund Langley, Edward the Third's fifth son.
By her I claim the kingdom. She was heir
To Roger, Earl of March, who was the son
Of Edmund Mortimer, who married Philippa,
Sole daughter unto Lionel, Duke of Clarence.
So, if the issue of the elder son
Succeed before the younger, I am king.

FIRST OFFICER

What plain proceeding is more plain than this?

OFFICERS

Long live our sovereign, England's king!

(Enter Margaret, followed by Henry
and the Other Lords.)

MARGARET

For thousand Yorks he shall not hide his head,
But boldly stand and front him to his face!

YORK

(to Henry, ignoring Margaret)

Thou art not king,
That head of thine doth not become a crown.
Thy hand is made to grasp a palmer's staff,
And not to grace an awful princely scepter.
Here is a hand to hold a scepter up
And with the same to act controlling laws!
Give place. By heaven, thou shalt rule no more
O'er him whom heaven created for thy ruler.

MARGARET

Obey, audacious traitor. Kneel for grace!

YORK

(to Henry)

Wouldst have me kneel? First let me ask of these
If they can brook I bow a knee to man.

(calling)

Call in my sons to be my bail!

(Enter York's sons, in age order:
Edward, George, and Richard, the last
bent over and walking with a limp.)

MARGARET

The bastard boys of York shall be the surety
For their traitor father?

YORK

See where they come, Edward, George, and Richard.
I'll warrant they'll make it good.

EDWARD

Ay, noble father.

GEORGE

If our words will serve.

RICHARD

And if words will not, then our weapons shall.

MARGARET

Why, what a brood of traitors have we here.

YORK

(calling, off)

Call hither to the stake my brave bear!
That, with the very shaking of his chains,
He may astonish these fell-lurking curs!

(Enter Warwick.)

HENRY

Why, Warwick? Hath thy knee forgot to bow?
Where is faith? Oh, where is loyalty?

WARWICK

My lord, I have considered with myself
The title of this most renowned duke.
And in my conscience do repute his Grace
The rightful heir to England's royal seat.

YORK

Now, by my father's badge,
The rampant bear chained to the ragged staff,
This day I'll wear aloft my burgonet.

MARGARET

And from thy burgonet we'll rend thy bear,
And tread it under foot with all contempt,
Despite the bearherd that protects the bear!
Give signal to the fight!

(Exeunt all.)

SCENE II-3

Ten years of civil war later. A
battlefield. York, Edward, George,
Richard, and Warwick in triumph.

YORK

These many years,
What valiant foemen, like to autumn's corn,
Have we mowed down, in tops of all their pride!

EDWARD

Have in our armors watched the winter's night!

GEORGE

Went all afoot in summer's scalding heat!

WARWICK

These many years.
That thou mightst repossess the crown in peace,
And of our labors thou shalt reap the gain.

RICHARD

Since I have entered into these wars,
Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself.
Though I be youngest, speak thou for me,
And tell them what I did.

YORK

Richard hath best deserved of all my sons.

EDWARD

I wonder how the King escaped our hands.

WARWICK

The great Lord Northford, whose warlike ears
Could never brook retreat, cheered up the drooping army,
And, as I hear, the King is fled to London
To call a present court of Parliament.

RICHARD

Let us pursue him ere the writs go forth!

YORK

What says Lord Warwick? Shall we after them?

WARWICK

After them? Nay, before them, if we can.

(Exeunt all.)

SCENE II-4

Another part of the field. Margaret leads the flight, followed by Ned, now in early adolescence; their ally Lord Northford; the Other Lords; Soldiers; and Henry, who stops for breath.

MARGARET

Away, my lord! You are slow. For shame, away!

HENRY

Can we outrun the heavens? Good Margaret, stay!

MARGARET

What are you made of? You'll nor fight nor fly.

NED

Father, but that my heart's on future mischief set,
I would speak blasphemy ere bid you fly,
But fly you must. Away, for your relief!

MARGARET

Lord of Northford, York slew thy father,
And you have vowed revenge.

NORTHFORD

York not our old men spares,
No more will I their babes!
He slew my father!

MARGARET

(to Henry)

If you be taken, we then should see the bottom
Of all our fortunes, but if we haply scape,
As well we may—if not through your neglect—
We shall to London get, where you are loved!

(Exeunt all.)

SCENE II-5

The court. York, Edward, George,
Richard, Warwick, and Soldiers
arriving.

WARWICK

And this the regal seat. Possess it, York,
For this is thine and not King Henry's heirs'.
Resolve thee, York. Claim the English crown.

(York sits on the throne. Soldiers
conceal themselves for ambush. Enter

Henry, Northford, and the Other Lords,
conferring to one side.)

HENRY

My lords, look where the sturdy rebel sits,
Even in the chair of state.
Lord of Northford, you have vowed revenge.

NORTHFORD

If I be not, heavens be revenged on me.
What, shall we suffer this? Let's pluck him down.
My heart for anger burns! I cannot brook it!
He slew my father!

HENRY

Be patient, gentle Northford.
(stepping forward)
Thou factious Duke of York, descend my throne
And kneel for grace and mercy at my feet!
I am thy sovereign.

YORK

I am thine.

HENRY

What title hast thou, traitor, to the crown?
I am the son of Henry the Fifth,
Who made the Dauphin and the French to stoop
And seized upon their towns and provinces.

WARWICK

Talk not of France, sith thou hast lost it all.

RICHARD

Father, tear the crown from the usurper's head!

HENRY

Peace thou, and give King Henry leave to speak!

(The Other Lords murmur.)

HENRY

Why faint you, lords?
My title's good, and better far than his.

WARWICK

Prove it, Henry, and thou shalt be king.

HENRY

Henry the Fourth by conquest got the crown.

YORK

Tw'as by rebellion against his king.

HENRY

(aside)

I know not what to say. My title's weak.

(to York)

Tell me, may not a king adopt an heir?

YORK

What then?

HENRY

An if he may, then am I lawful king.

For Richard the Second, in the view of many lords,

Resigned the crown to Henry the Fourth,

Whose heir my father was, and I am his.

(to the Other Lords)

Art thou against us?

FIRST OTHER LORD

His is the right. And therefore pardon me.

YORK

Why whisper you, my lords, and answer not?

SECOND OTHER LORD

My conscience tells me York is lawful king.

HENRY

All will revolt from me and turn to him.

NORTHFORD

King Henry, be thy title right or wrong,
Northford vows to fight in thy defense.
May that ground gape and swallow me alive
Where I shall kneel to him that slew my father!

WARWICK

(to Henry)

Do right unto this princely Duke of York,
Or I will fill the house with armed men,
And over the chair of state, where now he sits,
Write up his title with usurping blood.

(Warwick stamps his foot. The Soldiers
show themselves.)

HENRY

My lord of Warwick, hear but one word.
Let me for this my lifetime reign as king.

(Northford reacts.)

YORK

Confirm the crown to me and to mine heirs,
And thou shalt reign in quiet while thou liv'st.

(Edward, George, and Richard react.)

HENRY

I am content. Duke of York,
Enjoy the kingdom after my decease.

NORTHFORD

Base, fearful, and despairing Henry!
What wrong is this unto the Prince your son!
Farewell, faint-hearted and degenerate king,
In whose cold blood no spark of honor bides!
Be thou a prey unto the house of York,
And die in bands for this unmanly deed.

(Exit Northford.)

WARWICK

Why should you sigh, my lord?

HENRY

Not for myself, Lord Warwick, but my son,
Whom I unnaturally shall disinherit.

(to York)

But be it as it may. I here entail
The crown to thee and to thine heirs forever,
Conditionally, that here thou take an oath
To cease this civil war and, whilst I live,
To honor me as thy king and sovereign,
And neither by treason nor hostility
To seek to put me down and reign thyself.

YORK

This oath I willingly take and will perform.

WARWICK

Long live King Henry! Duke of York, embrace him.

(York leaves the throne and embraces
Henry.)

FIRST OTHER LORD

Now Henry and York are reconciled!

THE OTHER LORDS

Now Henry and York are reconciled!

SECOND OTHER LORD

Accursed be he that seeks to make them foes!

THE OTHER LORDS

Accursed be he that seeks to make them foes!

HENRY

(sitting on the throne, to York)

And long live thou, and these, thy forward sons.

YORK

Farewell, my gracious lord. I'll to my castle.

WARWICK

And I'll keep London with my soldiers.

(Exeunt York, Edward, George,
Richard, Warwick, and Soldiers,
leaving Henry and the Other Lords.
Enter Margaret, Ned, and Northford.)

FIRST OTHER LORD

Here comes the Queen.

SECOND OTHER LORD

Whose looks bewray her anger.

FIRST OTHER LORD

I'll steal away.

(Exeunt the Other Lords.)

HENRY

So will I.

MARGARET

Nay, go not from me, I will follow thee!
Had I been there, which am a silly woman,
The soldiers should have tossed me on their pikes
Before I would have granted to that act.

HENRY

Be patient, gentle queen, and I will stay.

MARGARET

Who can be patient in such extremes,
Seeing thou hast proved so unnatural a father.
Hath he deserved to lose his birthright thus?
Hadst thou but loved him half so well as I,
Or felt that pain which I did for him once,
Or nourished him as I did with my blood,
Thou wouldst have left thy dearest heart-blood there,
Rather than have made that savage duke thine heir
And disinherited thine only son.

NED

Father, you cannot disinherit me.
If you be king, why should not I succeed?

HENRY

Pardon me, Margaret. Pardon me, sweet son.
The Earl of Warwick and the Duke of York enforced me.

MARGARET

Enforced thee? Art thou king and wilt be forced?
I shame to hear thee speak. Ah, timorous wretch,
Thou hast undone thyself, thy son, and me.
Warwick is Chancellor and commands the Narrow Seas,
York is made Protector of the realm,

And yet shalt thou be safe? Such safety finds
The trembling lamb environed with wolves.
But thou preferrst thy life before thine honor.
And seeing thou dost, I here divorce myself
Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed.

HENRY

Gentle son Ned, thou wilt stay with me?

MARGARET

Ay, to be murdered by his enemies?
Lord Northford, that has forsworn thy colors,
Will follow mine if once he see them spread,
And spread they shall be, to thy foul disgrace
And utter ruin of the house of York.

NED

When I return with victory from the field,
I'll see your Grace. Till then, I'll follow her.

NORTHFORD

Our army is ready. He slew my father.

MARGARET

Come, we'll after them!

(Exeunt Margaret, Ned, and Northford,
leaving Henry alone.)

HENRY

Poor queen. How love to me and to her son
Hath made her break out into terms of rage.

SCENE II-6

York's castle. Edward, George, and
Richard arguing.

RICHARD

Brothers, give me leave.

EDWARD

No, I can better play the orator.

GEORGE

But I have reasons strong and forcible.

(Enter York, the Duchess of York, and
Rutland, their youngest son, a boy
demonstrably doted on by the family.)

YORK

Why, how now, sons, at a strife?
What is your quarrel? How began it first?

EDWARD

No quarrel, but a slight contention.

YORK

About what?

EDWARD

About that which concerns your Grace and us:
The crown of England, father, which is yours.

YORK

Mine, boy? Not till King Henry be dead.

GEORGE

Your right depends not on his life or death.

RICHARD

Now you are heir. Therefore enjoy it now.
By giving the house of Lancaster leave to breathe,
It will outrun you, father, in the end.

YORK

I took an oath that he should quietly reign.

EDWARD

But for a kingdom any oath may be broken.
I would break a thousand oaths to reign one year—

RICHARD

No. God forbid your Grace should be forsworn.

DUCHESS OF YORK

He shall be, if he claim by open war.

RICHARD

(to York)

I'll prove the contrary, if you'll hear me speak.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Thou canst not, son. It is impossible.

RICHARD

(ignoring her, to York)

An oath is of no moment, being not took
Before a true and lawful magistrate
That hath authority over him that swears.
Henry had none, but did usurp the place.
Then, seeing 'twas he that made you to depose,
Your oath, my lord, is vain and frivolous.
Therefore, to arms!
Why do we linger thus? I cannot rest
Until the white rose that I wear be dyed
Even in the lukewarm blood of Henry's heart.

YORK

Richard, enough. I will be king or die!

(Enter a Messenger)

DUCHESS OF YORK

But stay, what news? Why comst thou in such post?

MESSENGER

The Queen and the Prince, with Lord Northford,
Intend here to besiege you in your castle.
She is hard by with twenty thousand men.
And therefore fortify your hold, my lord.

YORK

Ay, with my sword. What, thinkst thou that we fear them?
Edward and Richard, you shall stay with me;
 (embracing Rutland)
Young Rutland.

(Exeunt the Duchess of York, Rutland,
and the Messenger, leaving York,
Edward, and Richard.)

YORK

Edward and Richard, you shall stay with me.
George shall post to London:
Let noble Warwick and the rest,
Whom we have left Protectors of the King,
With powerful policy strengthen themselves
And trust not simple Henry nor his oaths.

GEORGE

I'll win them, fear it not.
And thus most humbly I do take my leave.

(Exit George.)

YORK

The army of the Queen mean to besiege us?

EDWARD

She shall not need: we'll meet her in the field.

YORK

What, with five thousand men?

RICHARD

Ay, with five hundred, father, for a need.
A woman's general. What should we fear?

SCENE II-7

A battlefield. Rutland on the run.

RUTLAND

Ah, whither shall I fly to scape their hands?

(Enter Northford.)

NORTHFORD

Rutland, the brat of this accursed duke,
Whose father slew my father. He shall die.

RUTLAND

I am too mean a subject for thy wrath.
Be thou revenged on men, and let me live.

NORTHFORD

In vain thou speakst, poor boy. My father's blood
Hath stopped the passage where thy words should enter.

RUTLAND

Ah, let me live in prison all my days,
And when I give occasion of offense
Then let me die, for now thou hast no cause.

NORTHFORD

No cause? Thy father slew my father. Therefore die.

(Northford stabs Rutland to death.)

NORTHFORD

York, I come!
And this thy son's blood, cleaving to my blade,
Shall rust upon my weapon till thy blood,
Congealed with this, do make me wipe off both!

SCENE II-8

Another part of the field. Northford and
Soldiers hold York prisoner before
Margaret.

MARGARET

I would prolong a while the traitor's life.

YORK

I dare your quenchless fury to more rage.
I am your butt, and I abide your shot.
Why come you not? What, multitudes, and fear?

NORTHFORD

What would your Grace have done unto him now?

MARGARET

Come, make him stand upon this molehill here
That raught at mountains with outstretched arms,
Yet parted but the shadow with his hand.

(Soldiers hold York before Margaret.)

MARGARET

Where are your mess of sons to back you now,
The wanton Edward and the lusty George?
And where's that valiant crookback prodigy,

Dickie, your boy, that with his grumbling voice
Was wont to cheer his dad in mutinies?
Or, with the rest, where is your darling, Rutland?

(showing him a bloody rag)

Look, York, I stained this napkin with the blood
That Northford with his rapier's point
Made issue from the bosom of the boy.
And if thine eyes can water for his death,
I give thee this to dry thy cheeks withal.
I prithee grieve to make me merry, York.
What, hath thy fiery heart so parched thine entrails
That not a tear can fall for your youngest's death?
Why art thou patient, man? Thou shouldst be mad;
And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus.
Stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance.
Thou wouldst be feed, I see, to make me sport.
York cannot speak unless he wear a crown.
A crown for York!

(taking a paper crown from a Soldier)

And, lords, bow low to him.
Hold you his hands whilst I do set it on.
(putting it on his head)

Ay, marry, sir, now looks he like a king.
Ay, this is he that took King Henry's chair,
And this is he was his adopted heir.
And will you pale your head in Henry's glory
And rob his temples of the diadem
Now, in his life, against your holy oath?
Oh, 'tis a fault too unpardonable.

Off with the crown and, with the crown, his head;
And whilst we breathe, take time to do him dead.

NORTHFORD

That is my office, for my father's sake.

MARGARET

Nay, stay, let's hear the orisons he makes.

YORK

She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France,
Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth,
How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex
To triumph, like an Amazonian trull,
Upon their woes whom fortune captivates!
Tis beauty that doth oft make women proud,
But God He knows thy share thereof is small.
Tis virtue that doth make them most admired,
The contrary doth make thee wondered at.
Tis government that makes them seem divine,
The want thereof makes thee abominable.
Oh, tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide,
How couldst thou drain the lifeblood of the child
To bid the father wipe his eyes withal,
And yet be seen to bear a woman's face?
Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible,
Thou, stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
These tears are my sweet child's obsequies,

And every drop cries vengeance for his death
Gainst thee, Northford, and thee, false Frenchwoman!
There, take the crown, and, with the crown, my curse:
And in thy need such comfort come to thee
As now I reap at thy too cruel hand!

NORTHFORD

Beshrew me, but his passions moves me so
That hardly can I check my eyes from tears.

MARGARET

What, weeping ripe, my Lord Northford?
Here's for thy oath!
(stabbing York)
Here's for thy father's death!
And here's to right our gentle-hearted king!

(York dies.)

MARGARET

Off with his head, and set it on York gates,
So York may overlook the town of York!

(Soldiers drag York's corpse off. Enter
Henry with the Other Lords.)

MARGARET

Welcome, my lord, to this brave town of York.
Yonder's the head of that arch-enemy

That sought to be encompassed with your crown.
Doth not the object cheer your heart, my lord?

HENRY

Withhold revenge, dear God! Tis not my fault,
Nor wittingly have I infringed my vow.

MARGARET

My lord, cheer up your spirits: our foes are nigh,
And this soft courage makes your followers faint.

(Enter Ned.)

MARGARET

You promised knighthood to our forward son.
Unsheathe your sword and dub him presently.
Ned, kneel down.

(Ned kneels.)

HENRY

(dubbing him)

Plantagenet, arise a knight,
And learn this lesson: draw thy sword in right.

NED

My gracious father, by your kingly leave,
I'll draw it as apparent to the crown
And in that quarrel use it to the death.

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER

Royal commanders, be in readiness,
For with a band of thirty thousand men
Comes Warwick backing of the Duke of York,
And many fly to him.
Deraign your battle, for they are at hand.

NORTHFORD

(to Henry)

I would your Highness would depart the field.
The Queen hath best success when you are absent.

MARGARET

Ay, good my lord, and leave us to our fortune.

(Enter Warwick, Edward, George,
and Richard, with the Duchess of
York in mourning dress.)

DUCHESS OF YORK

Sweet Duke of York! Our prop to lean upon,
Now thou art gone, we have no staff, no stay.

Now my soul's palace is become a prison.
Ah, would she break from hence, that this my body
Might in the ground be closed up in rest.
For never henceforth shall I joy again,
Never, Oh, never shall I see more joy!

EDWARD

Now, perjured Henry, wilt thou kneel for grace
And set thy diadem upon my head,
Or bide the mortal fortune of the field?

MARGARET

Go rate thy minions, proud insulting boy.
Becomes it thee to be thus bold in terms
Before thy sovereign and thy lawful king?

EDWARD

I am his king, and he should bow his knee.
I was adopted heir by his consent.
Since when, his oath is broke, for, as I hear,
You that are king, though he do wear the crown,
Have caused him to blot out me and put his own son in.

NORTHFORD

And reason too:
Who should succeed the father but the son?

DUCHESS OF YORK

(to Northford)

Are you there, butcher? Oh, I cannot speak!

RICHARD

(to Northford)

Tw'as you that killed young Rutland, was it not!

NORTHFORD

Ay, and old York— !

(off Margaret's reaction)

And yet not satisfied.

RICHARD

For God's sake, lords, give signal to the fight!

WARWICK

What sayst thou, Henry? Wilt thou yield the crown?

MARGARET

Why, how now, long-tongued Warwick, dare you speak?

HENRY

Have done with words, my lords, and hear me speak.

MARGARET

Defy them, then, or else hold close thy lips.

HENRY

I prithee, give no limits to my tongue.
I am a king and privileged to speak.

NORTHFORD

My liege, the wound that bred this meeting here
Cannot be cured by words. Therefore, be still.

NED

If that be right which Warwick says is right,
There is no wrong, but everything is right!

RICHARD

(to Ned)

Whoever got thee, there thy mother stands,
For well I wot thou hast thy mother's tongue.

MARGARET

But thou art neither like thy sire nor dam,
But like a foul misshapen stigmatic,
Marked by the Destinies to be avoided,
As venom toads or lizards' dreadful stings.

EDWARD

No, wrangling woman, we'll no longer stay.
These words will cost ten thousand lives this day.
Give signal to the fight!

(Exit each party, leaving Henry alone.)

HENRY

Oh, God! Methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
How many makes the hour full complete,
How many hours brings about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live.
So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,
Passed over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah, what a life were this! How sweet, how lovely!

(Enter Margaret, Ned, Northford, and
Soldiers, in flight.)

NED

Fly, father, fly, for all your friends are fled,
And Warwick rages like a chafed bull.
Away, for Death doth hold us in pursuit!

NORTHFORD

Mount you, my lord! Towards Scotland post amain!

MARGARET

Edward and Richard like a brace of greyhounds
Having the fearful flying hare in sight,
Are at our backs, and therefore hence amain!

(Exeunt Henry, Ned, and Northford,
leaving Margaret. She conceals herself.

Enter Edward, George, Richard,
Warwick, and Soldiers—Margaret.
observing.)

EDWARD

And now to London with triumphant march,
There to be crowned England's royal king!

WARWICK

From whence shall Warwick cut the sea to France
And ask the Lady Bona for thy queen.
Lewis, King of France, was Henry's friend,
So shalt thou sinew both these lands together,
And having France thy friend, thou shalt not dread
The scattered foe that hopes to rise again.

EDWARD

Even as thou wilt, sweet Warwick, let it be,
For in thy shoulder do I build my seat,
And never will I undertake the thing

Wherein thy counsel and consent is wanting.
Richard, I will create thee Duke of Gloucester,
And George, of Clarence. Warwick as ourself
Shall do and undo as him pleaseth best.

RICHARD

(to Warwick)

Let me be Duke of Clarence, George of Gloucester,
For Gloucester's dukedom is too ominous.

WARWICK

Tut, that's a foolish observation.
Richard, be Duke of Gloucester. Now to London,
To see these honors in possession.

(Exeunt Edward, George, Richard,
Warwick, and Soldiers. Margaret
emerges.)

MARGARET

Now Margaret must strike her sail
And learn, awhile, to serve.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SCENE III-1

France, the court. Margaret is in a deep
curtsey before Lewis, King of France,
on the throne. Lady Bona, Lewis's
sister, sits beside him. Northford and
Ned stand aside.

LEWIS

Fair Queen of England, worthy Margaret,
Sit down with us.

MARGARET

No, mighty King of France. I was, I must confess,
Great Albion's queen in former golden days,
But now mischance hath trod my title down
And with dishonor laid me on the ground,
Where I must take like seat unto my fortune
And to my humble seat conform myself.

LEWIS

Be plain, Queen Margaret, and tell thy grief.
It shall be eased if France can yield relief.

MARGARET

(going on her knees)

Now therefore be it known to noble Lewis
That Henry is become a banished man
And forced to live in Scotland a forlorn,
While proud ambitious Edward, Duke of York,
Usurps the regal title and the seat
Of England's true-anointed lawful king.
This is the cause that I, poor Margaret,
With this my son, the prince and Henry's heir,
Am come to crave thy just and lawful aid.

LEWIS

Renowned queen, with patience calm the storm
While we bethink a means to break it off.

MARGARET

The more we stay, the stronger grows our foe.

LEWIS

The more I stay, the more I'll succor thee.

(Enter Warwick.)

MARGARET

(rising)

And see where comes the breeder of my sorrow!

LEWIS

What's he approacheth boldly to our presence?

NORTHFORD

Our Earl of Warwick, Edward's greatest friend.

LEWIS

Welcome, brave Warwick. What brings thee to France?

WARWICK

From worthy Edward, King of Albion,
My lord and sovereign and thy vowed friend,
I come in kindness and unfeigned love,
First, to do greetings to thy royal person,
And then to crave a league of amity,
And, lastly, to confirm that amity
With nuptial knot, if thou vouchsafe to grant
That virtuous Lady Bona, thy fair sister,
To England's king in lawful marriage.

MARGARET

If that go forward, Henry's hope is done!

WARWICK

(to Lady Bona)

And, gracious madam, in our king's behalf,
I am commanded, with your leave and favor,
Humbly to kiss your hand, and with my tongue

To tell the passion of my sovereign's heart,
Where fame, late entering at his heedful ears,
Hath placed thy beauty's image and thy virtue.

MARGARET

King Lewis and Lady Bona, hear me speak.
Yet here Ned stands, King Henry's son.
Look, therefore, Lewis, that by this league and marriage
Thou draw not on thy danger and dishonor.

WARWICK

Injurious Margaret!

NED

And why not "Queen"?

WARWICK

Because thy father Henry did usurp,
And thou no more art prince than she is queen.

LEWIS

Queen Margaret, Prince Ned, Lord Northford,
Vouchsafe, at our request, to stand aside
While I use further conference with Warwick.

MARGARET

Heavens grant that Warwick's words bewitch him not!

SCENE III-2

England, the court. Edward on the throne, Richard and George standing beside him, the Other Lords in attendance. Elizabeth Grey, in mourning dress, kneeling before the throne; the Earl of Rivers, her brother, and Lord Grey, her son, standing aside.

EDWARD

(to George and Richard)

At Saint Albans field

This lady's husband, Sir Richard Grey, was slain,
His land then seized on by the conqueror.
Her suit is now to repossess those lands,
Which we in justice cannot well deny,
Because in quarrel of the house of York
The worthy gentleman did lose his life.

GEORGE

Your Highness shall do well to grant her suit.
It were dishonor to deny it her.

EDWARD

It were no less, but yet I'll make a pause.

GEORGE

(to Richard, aside)

Yea, is it so?

I see the lady hath a thing to grant

Before the King will grant her humble suit.

RICHARD

(to George, aside)

Her brother there, Lord Rivers, and Lord Grey:

We are not safe, George. We are not safe.

EDWARD

(going to her)

How many children hast thou, widow? Tell me.

ELIZABETH

(rising)

Three, my most gracious lord.

GEORGE

(to Richard, aside)

You shall have four if you'll be ruled by him.

EDWARD

Then get your husband's lands to do them good.

ELIZABETH

Therefore I came unto your Majesty.

EDWARD

What service wilt thou do me if I give them?

ELIZABETH

What you command that rests in me to do.

EDWARD

An easy task: tis but to love a king.

ELIZABETH

That's soon performed because I am a subject.

EDWARD

No, by my troth, I did not mean such love.
To tell thee plain, I aim to lie with thee.

RICHARD

(to George, aside)

He is the bluntest wooer in Christendom.

ELIZABETH

To tell you plain, I had rather lie in prison.
I know I am too mean to be your queen
And yet too good to be your concubine.

EDWARD

You cavil, widow. I did mean my queen.

ELIZABETH

Twill grieve your grace Lord Grey should call you father.

EDWARD

Thou art a widow and thou hast some children,
And, by God's mother, I, being but a bachelor,
Have other some. Why, 'tis a happy thing
To be the father unto many sons.

Answer no more, for thou shalt be my queen.

(to George and Richard)

You'd think it strange if I should marry her?

GEORGE

To who, my lord?

EDWARD

Why, George, to myself.

RICHARD

That would be ten days' wonder at the least.

EDWARD

Well, jest on, brothers. I can tell you both
Her suit is granted for her husband's lands.
Now, brother George, how like you our choice,
That you stand pensive, as half malcontent?

GEORGE

As well as Lewis of France or the Earl of Warwick?
Which are so weak of courage and in judgment
That they'll take no offense at our abuse?

EDWARD

Suppose they take offense without a cause,
They are but Lewis and Warwick. I am Edward,
Your king and Warwick's, and must have my will.

RICHARD

(to George, aside)

We are not safe, George. We are not safe.

EDWARD

Yea, brother Richard, are you offended too?

RICHARD

Not I! No, God forbid that I should wish them severed
Whom God hath joined together.

ELIZABETH

My lords, before it pleased his majesty
To raise my state to title of a queen,
Do me but right and you must all confess
That I was not ignoble of descent,
And meaner than myself have had like fortune.

EDWARD

My love, forbear to fawn upon their frowns.
Lord Grey and Lord Rivers!

(Grey and Rivers kneel.)

EDWARD

What danger or what sorrow can befall thee
So long as Edward is thy constant friend,
And their true sovereign, whom they must obey?

RICHARD

(to Elizabeth)

Bear three daughters.

(to Edward)

You love the breeder better than the male.

SCENE III-3

France, the court. Lewis and Lady
Bona in private with Warwick;
Margaret, Ned and Northford aside,
waiting.

LEWIS

Now, Warwick, tell me, even upon thy conscience,
Is Edward your true king? For I were loath
To link with him that were not lawful chosen.

WARWICK

Thereon I pawn my credit and mine honor.

LEWIS

Then further, all dissembling set aside,
Tell me for truth the measure of his love
Unto our sister Bona.

WARWICK

Myself have often heard him say and swear
That this his love was an eternal plant,
Whereof the root was fixed in virtue's ground,
The leaves and fruit maintained with beauty's sun,
Exempt from envy but not from disdain,
Unless the Lady Bona quit his pain.

LEWIS

Now, sister, let us hear your firm resolve.

LADY BONA

Your grant or your denial shall be mine.

(to Warwick)

Yet I confess that often ere this day,
When I have heard your king's desert recounted,
Mine ear hath tempted judgment to desire.

LEWIS

Draw near, Queen Margaret.

(as Margaret, Ned, and Northford come forward)

Then, Warwick, thus: our sister shall be Edward's.

NED

To Edward, but not to the English king!

MARGARET

Deceitful Warwick, it was thy device

By this alliance to make void my suit!

Before thy coming, Lewis was Henry's friend.

WARWICK

Henry now lives in Scotland at his ease,

Where, having nothing, nothing can he lose.

MARGARET

Peace, impudent and shameless Warwick,

Proud setter-up and puller-down of kings!

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER

(to Warwick)

My lord ambassador, these letters are for you,

Sent from your brother.

(to Lewis)
These from our English king unto your Majesty.
And, madam, these for you—from whom, I know not.

(Warwick, Lewis, and Margaret skim
their letters.)

LEWIS
Warwick, what are thy news? And yours, fair queen?

MARGARET
Mine, such as fill my heart with unhopèd joys.

WARWICK
Mine, full of sorrow and heart's discontent.

LEWIS
(to Warwick)
What, has your king married the Lady Elizabeth Grey!
And now, to soothe your forgery and his,
Sends me a paper to persuade me patience!
Is this the alliance that he seeks with France?
Dare he presume to scorn us in this manner?

MARGARET
I told your Majesty as much before.
This proveth Edward's love and Warwick's honesty.

LADY BONA

Dear brother, how shall Bona be revenged
But by thy help to this distressed queen?

WARWICK

King Lewis, I here protest in sight of heaven
That I am clear from this misdeed of Edward's,
No more my king, for he dishonors me,
But most himself, if he could see his shame.
I was the chief that raised him to the crown,
And I'll be chief to bring him down again.
I here renounce him and return to Henry.
My noble queen, let former grudges pass,
And henceforth I am thy true servitor.
I will revenge his wrong to Lady Bona
And replant Henry in his former state.
If King Lewis vouchsafe to furnish us
With some few bands of chosen soldiers,
I'll undertake to land them on our coast
And force the tyrant from his seat by war.
'Tis not his new-made bride shall succor him.

LADY BONA

My quarrel and this English queen's are one.

WARWICK

And mine, fair Lady Bona, joins with yours.

LEWIS

And mine with hers and thine and Margaret's.

NORTHFORD

And mine.

NED

And mine.

MARGARET

And I am ready to put armor on.

SCENE III-4

England, the countryside. Henry alone.

HENRY

From Scotland am I stolen, even of pure love,
To greet mine own land with my wishful sight.

(Enter two Gamekeepers.)

FIRST GAMEKEEPER

Ay, here's a deer whose skin's a keeper's fee.
This is the quondam king. Let's seize upon him.

SECOND GAMEKEEPER

(to Henry)

You are the king King Edward hath deposed,
And we his subjects sworn in all allegiance
Will apprehend you as his enemy.

FIRST GAMEKEEPER

But if thou be a king, where is thy crown?

HENRY

My crown is in my heart, not on my head,
Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,
Nor to be seen. My crown is called content.
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.

SECOND GAMEKEEPER

We charge you in God's name and the King's
To go with us unto the Tower.

HENRY

In God's name, lead. Your king's name be obeyed,
And what God will, that let your king perform.
And what he will, I humbly yield unto.

SCENE III-5

Battlefield. Edward stabbing Warwick.

EDWARD

So, lie thou there.

WARWICK

(falling)

Lo, now my glory smeared in dust and blood.

EDWARD

Die thou—and die our fear.

(Exit Edward. Enter Margaret, wearing armor, followed by Ned, Northford, and Soldiers.)

WARWICK

Why, what is pomp, rule, reign, but earth and dust?
And live we how we can, yet die we must.

(He dies.)

MARGARET

What though the mast be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding-anchor lost,
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood?
Say Warwick was our anchor: what of that?
Our slaughtered friends the tackles: what of these?
We will not from the helm to sit and weep,
But keep our course, though the rough wind say no,

From shelves and rocks that threaten us with wrack.
And what is Edward but a ruthless sea?
What George but a quicksand of deceit?
And Richard but a ragged fatal rock,
All these the enemies to our poor bark?
This speak I, lords, to let you understand,
If case some one of you would fly from us,
That there's no hoped-for mercy with the brothers
More than with ruthless waves, with sands and rocks.
Why, courage then! What cannot be avoided
'Twere childish weakness to lament or fear.

NED

Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit
Should, if a coward heard her speak these words,
Infuse his breast with magnanimity
And make him, naked, foil a man-at-arms.
I speak not this as doubting any here,
For did I but suspect a fearful man,
He should have leave to go away betimes,
Lest in our need he might infect another
And make him of like spirit to himself.
If any such be here, as God forbid,
Let him depart before we need his help.

NORTHFORD

Women and children of so high a courage,
And warriors faint? Why, 'twere perpetual shame!
And he that will not fight for such a hope,

Go home to bed and, like the owl by day,
If he arise, be mocked and wondered at.

MARGARET

Thanks, gentle Northford.

NED

And take his thanks that yet hath nothing else.

MARGARET

Here pitch our battle. Hence we will not budge.
You fight in justice. Then, in God's name, lords,
Be valiant, and give signal to the fight!

SCENE III-6

Shortly later, on the field. Edward,
George, Richard, and Soldiers hold
Margaret and Northford prisoner.

EDWARD

Away with Northford to Hames Castle straight.
Go bear him hence. I will not hear him speak.

NORTHFORD

For my part, I'll not trouble thee with words.

MARGARET

(to Northford)

So part we sadly in this troublous world
To meet with joy in sweet Jerusalem.

(Exeunt Soldiers with Northford.)

EDWARD

Is proclamation made that who finds the prince
Shall have a high reward, and he his life?

RICHARD

It is, and lo where youthful Neddy comes.

(Enter Rivers and Grey, holding Ned
prisoner.)

EDWARD

(to Ned)

What satisfaction canst thou make
For bearing arms, for stirring up my subjects,
And all the trouble thou hast turned me to?

NED

Speak like a subject, proud ambitious York.
Suppose that I am now my father's mouth:
Resign thy chair, and where I stand, kneel thou,
Whilst I propose the selfsame words to thee
Which, traitor, thou wouldst have me answer to.

MARGARET

Ah, that thy father had been so resolved!

RICHARD

That you might still have worn the petticoat
And ne'er have stolen the breech from Henry.

NED

I know my duty. You are all undutiful:
Lascivious Edward, and thou perjured George,
And thou misshapen Dick, I tell ye all
I am your better, traitors as ye are,
And thou usurp'st my father's right and mine.

RICHARD

By heaven, brat, I'll plague you for that word.

MARGARET

Ay, thou wast born to be a plague to men.

RICHARD

For God's sake, take away this captive scold!

EDWARD

(stabbing Ned)

Take that, the likeness of this railer here!

RICHARD

(stabbing Ned)

Sprawlst thou? Take that to end thy agony!

GEORGE

(stabbing Ned)

And there's for twitting me with perjury!

(Ned dies.)

MARGARET

Oh, kill me too!

RICHARD

Marry, and shall.

Why should she live to fill the world with words?

(Margaret keels over.)

EDWARD

What, doth she swoon? Use means for her recovery.

(Soldiers go to Margaret's aid.)

RICHARD

(to George, aside)

Excuse me to the King my brother.

I'll hence to London on a serious matter.

Ere you come there, be sure to hear some news.

GEORGE

What?

RICHARD

(to George, aside)

The Tower, the Tower.

(Exit Richard.)

MARGARET

(reviving)

Oh, Ned, sweet Ned, speak to thy mother, boy.

Canst thou not speak? Oh, traitors, murderers!

No, no, my heart will burst an if I speak.

And I will speak, that so my heart may burst.

Butchers and villains! Bloody cannibals!

How sweet a plant have you untimely cropped!

If you ever chance to have a child,

Look in his youth to have him so cut off

As, deathsmen, you have rid this sweet young prince.

EDWARD

Away with her. Go bear her hence perforce.

MARGARET

Nay, never bear me hence! Dispatch me here.
Here sheathe thy sword: I'll pardon thee my death.
What, wilt thou not? Then, George, do it thou.

GEORGE

By heaven, I will not do thee so much ease.

MARGARET

Good George, do! Sweet George, do thou do it.

GEORGE

Didst thou not hear me swear I would not do it?

MARGARET

Ay, but thou usest to forswear thyself.
Twas sin before, but now 'tis charity.
What, wilt thou not?
Where is that devil's butcher, Richard,
Hard-favored Richard? Richard, where art thou?
Murder is thy alms-deed.
Petitioners for blood thou ne'er put'st back!

EDWARD

Away, I say! I charge you bear her hence.

MARGARET

(to Edward)

So come to you and yours as to this prince!

(to George)

So come to you and yours as to this prince!

(to Rivers)

So come to you and yours as to this prince!

(to Grey)

So come to you and yours as to this prince!

(Exeunt Soldiers with Margaret.)

EDWARD

Where's Richard gone?

GEORGE

To London all in post, and, as I guess,
To make a bloody supper in the Tower.

EDWARD

He's sudden if a thing comes in his head.

SCENE III-7

The Tower. Henry, guarded by a
Soldier, reading a prayerbook. Enter
Richard.

RICHARD

Good day, my lord. What, at your book so hard?
Sirrah, leave us to ourselves. We must confer.

(Exit Soldier.)

HENRY

So flies the reckless shepherd from the wolf.
So first the harmless sheep doth yield his fleece
And next his throat unto the butcher's knife.

RICHARD

Thy son I killed for his presumption.

HENRY

Hadst thou been killed when first thou didst presume,
Thou hadst not lived to kill a son of mine.
Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born,
To signify thou cam'st to bite the world.
And if the rest be true which I have heard,
Thou cam'st—

RICHARD

I'll hear no more. Die, prophet, in thy speech!
(stabbing him)
For this, amongst the rest, was I ordained.

HENRY

Ay, and for much more slaughter after this.
Oh, God, forgive my sins, and pardon thee.

(Henry dies.)

RICHARD

See how my sword weeps for the poor king's death.
(stabbing him again)
If any spark of life be yet remaining,
Down, down to hell, and say I sent thee thither.
I that have neither pity, love, nor fear,
I have no brother, I am like no brother!
King Henry and the prince his son are gone.
George, thy turn is next, and then the rest.

SCENE III-8

The new court. Edward on the throne,
Elizabeth beside him, attended by the
Ladies. George and Richard on one
side vs. Rivers and Grey on the other;
the Other Lords in attendance. The
Duchess of York, still in mourning
dress, holds a baby, the Young Prince,
heir to the crown.

EDWARD

Thus have we swept suspicion from our seat
And made our footstool of security.
Come hither, mother, and let me kiss my boy.

(The Duchess of York takes the Young
Prince to Edward.)

EDWARD

George and Richard, love my lovely queen,
And kiss your princely nephew, brothers both.

(Richard and George kiss the Young
Prince, bow to Elizabeth, embrace
Rivers and Grey.)

EDWARD

Now am I seated as my soul delights,
Having my country's peace and brothers' loves.

FIRST OTHER LORD

Now is the winter of our discontent—

SECOND OTHER LORD

—Made glorious summer by this sun of York!

THE OTHER LORDS

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York!

EDWARD

(eyeballing the Ladies)

And now what rests but that we spend the time
With stately triumphs, mirthful comic shows,
Such as befits the pleasure of the court?

(Enter Soldiers, with Margaret in
mourning dress.)

RIVERS

What will your Grace have done with Margaret?

MARGARET

(sinking to the ground)

So come to you and yours as to this prince.

EDWARD

Away with her and waft her hence to France.
Sound drums and trumpets! Farewell, sour annoy,
For here I hope begins our lasting joy.

(Musicians enter, playing. Edward
leaves the throne to meet the Ladies.)

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

Years later. The court. Margaret, old, in mourning dress.

MARGARET

I do find more pain in banishment in France,
Than death can yield me here by my abode.
Here in these confines slyly have I lurked
To watch the waning of mine enemies.

(Enter Elizabeth, Rivers, and Grey.
Margaret, unseen, observes them.)

RIVERS

Have patience, sister. There's no doubt his Majesty
Will soon recover his accustomed health.

GREY

In that you brook it ill, it makes him worse.
Therefore, mother, entertain good comfort
And cheer his Grace with quick and merry eyes.

ELIZABETH

If he were dead, what would betide on me?

GREY

No other harm but loss of such a lord.

ELIZABETH

The loss of such a lord includes all harms.

GREY

The heavens have blessed you with a goodly son
To be your comforter when he is gone.

ELIZABETH

Ah, but the Prince is young, and his minority
Is put unto the trust of Richard,
A man that loves not me nor none of you.
Small joy have I in being England's queen.

MARGARET

(aside)

And lessened be that small, God I beseech Him!
Thy honor, state, and seat is due to me.

(Enter Richard.)

RICHARD

They do me wrong, and I will not endure it!
Who is it that complains unto the King
That I, forsooth, am stern and love them not?

MARGARET

(aside)

Out, devil! I do remember thee too well:
Thou killedst my husband Henry in the Tower,
And Ned, my poor son.

GREY

(to Richard)

To who in all this presence speaks your Grace?

RICHARD

To thee, Grey, that hast nor honesty nor grace.
When have I injured thee? When done thee wrong?
Or thee, Rivers?

(to Elizabeth)

Or thee? Or any of your faction?

ELIZABETH

You envy my advancement, and my friends'.
God grant we never may have need of you.

RICHARD

Meantime God grants that we have need of you.
Our brother George is imprisoned in the Tower.

ELIZABETH

I never did incense his Majesty
Against your brother George, but have been
An earnest advocate to plead for him.

RICHARD

Ere you were queen, ay, or your husband king,
I was a packhorse in his great affairs,
A weeder-out of his proud adversaries,
A liberal rewarder of his friends.
I am too childish-foolish for this world.

MARGARET

(aside)

Hie thee to hell for shame, and leave this world,
Thou cacodemon! There thy kingdom is.

RIVERS

(to Richard)

In those busy days
Which here you urge to prove us enemies,
We followed then our lord, our sovereign king.
So should we you, if you should be our king.

RICHARD

If I should be? I had rather be a peddler.
Far be it from my heart, the thought thereof.

ELIZABETH

As little joy, my lord, as you suppose
You should enjoy were you this country's king,

As little joy you may suppose in me
That I enjoy, being the queen thereof.

MARGARET

(aside)

As little joy enjoys the queen thereof,
For I am she, and altogether joyless.
I can no longer hold me patient!

(coming forward)

Hear me, you wrangling pirates, that fall out
In sharing that which you have pilled from me!
Which of you trembles not that looks on me?
If not, that I am queen, you bow like subjects,
Yet that, by you deposed, you quake like rebels.

(to Richard)

Ah, gentle villain, do not turn away.

RICHARD

Foul, wrinkled witch, what mak'st thou in my sight?

MARGARET

But repetition of what thou hast marred.
That will I make before I let thee go.
A husband and a son thou ow'st to me,

(to Elizabeth)

And thou a kingdom. All of you, allegiance.
This sorrow that I have by right is yours,
And all the pleasures you usurp are mine.

RICHARD

The curse my noble father laid on thee
When thou didst crown his warlike brows with paper,
And with thy scorns drew'st rivers from his eyes,
And then, to dry them, gav'st the Duke a clout
Steeped in the faultless blood of pretty Rutland,
His curses then, from bitterness of soul
Denounced against thee, are all fallen upon thee.
And God, not we, hath plagued thy bloody deed.

ELIZABETH

So just is God to right the innocent.

RIVERS

Tyrants themselves wept when it was reported.
No man but prophesied revenge for it.

GREY

Northford, then present, wept to see it.

MARGARET

Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven?
Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!
(to Elizabeth)
Though not by war, by surfeit die your king,
As ours by murder to make him a king.
Thy son, that now is Prince of Wales,
For Ned, our son, that was Prince of Wales,

Die in his youth by like untimely violence.
Thyself a queen, for me that was a queen,
Outlive thy glory, like my wretched self.
Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's death,
Long die thy happy days before thy death,
And, after many lengthened hours of grief,
Die neither mother, wife, nor England's queen.

(to Rivers and Grey)

Rivers and Grey, you were standers-by,
When my son was stabbed with bloody daggers.
God I pray that none of you may live his natural age,
But by some unlooked accident cut off.

RICHARD

Have done thy charm, thou hateful, withered hag.

MARGARET

And leave out thee?
Stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me.
Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog,
Thou that wast sealed in thy nativity
The slave of nature and the son of hell,
Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb,
Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins,
Thou rag of honor, thou detested—

RICHARD

Margaret!

MARGARET

—Richard!

ELIZABETH

Thus have you breathed your curse against yourself.

MARGARET

Poor painted queen, vain flourish of my fortune.
Why strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider,
Whose deadly web ensnareth thee about?

(to Richard)

If heaven have any grievous plague in store
Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,
Oh, let them keep it—keep it!—till thy sins be ripe
And *then* hurl down their indignation
On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace.

(to Elizabeth)

Fool, fool, thou whetst a knife to kill thyself.
The day will come that thou shalt wish for me
To help thee curse this poisonous bunch-backed toad.

(Exit Margaret. Then she returns,
unseen by the others, and observes.)

GREY

My hair doth stand an end to hear her curses.

RIVERS

And so doth mine. I muse why she's at liberty.

RICHARD

I cannot blame her. By God's holy mother,
She hath had too much wrong, and I repent
My part thereof that I have done to her.

ELIZABETH

I never did her any, to my knowledge.

(Enter a Messenger.)

MESSENGER

(to Elizabeth, Rivers, and Grey)

Madam, his Majesty doth call for you,
And for your Grace, and yours, my gracious lord.

(Exeunt Elizabeth, Rivers, Grey, and
the Messenger, leaving Richard alone,
Margaret observing.)

RICHARD

George, who I indeed have cast in darkness,
I do bewEEP to many simple gulls,
And tell them 'tis the Queen and her allies
That stir the King against the Duke my brother.

MARGARET

(aside)

“If heaven have any grievous plague in store,
Oh, let them keep it—keep it—till thy sins be ripe.”

(Enter two Murderers.)

RICHARD

But soft, here come my executioners.
How now, my hardy, stout, resolved mates?
Are you now going to dispatch this thing?

FIRST MURDERER

We are, my lord, and come to have the warrant
That we may be admitted where he is.

RICHARD

(handing them a document)

But, sirs, be sudden in the execution,
Withal obdurate; do not hear him plead,
For George is well-spoken and perhaps
May move your hearts to pity if you mark him.

SECOND MURDERER

Talkers are no good doers. Be assured
We go to use our hands and not our tongues.

RICHARD

About your business straight.

(Exeunt Richard and the Murderers.

Silence.

The Duchess of York screams, off. She enters, distraught. Margaret, unseen, observes.)

DUCHESS OF YORK

Oh, George! Oh, my unhappy son!

MARGARET

(aside)

... “So come to you and yours as to this prince,
So come to you and yours as to this prince.”

DUCHESS OF YORK

My husband lost his life to get the crown!
And often up and down my sons were tossed
For me to joy, and weep, their gain and loss.
And being seated, and domestic broils
Clean overblown, themselves the conquerors
Make war upon themselves, brother to brother,
Blood to blood, self against self!

(Elizabeth screams, off. She enters, also now in mourning dress, holding Young York by the hand and followed by Rivers and Grey.)

ELIZABETH

Ah, who shall hinder me to wail and weep,
To chide my fortune and torment myself?
I'll join with black despair against my soul
And to myself become an enemy!

DUCHESS OF YORK

What means this scene of rude impatience?

ELIZABETH

To make an act of tragic violence.
Edward, my lord, thy son, our king, is dead.

DUCHESS OF YORK

George and Edward!

MARGARET

(aside)

... "Though not by war, by surfeit die your king,
As ours by murder to make him a king."

DUCHESS OF YORK

(to Elizabeth)

Thou art a widow. Yet thou art a mother,
And hast the comfort of thy children left thee.
But death hath snatch'd my husband from mine arms,
And pluck'd two crutches from my feeble limbs,
Edward and George! Oh, what cause have I,
Thine being but a moiety of my moan,
To overgo thy woes and drown thy cries!

ELIZABETH

Give me no help in lamentation.
I am not barren to bring forth complaints.
All springs reduce their currents to mine eyes,
That I, being govern'd by the watery moon,
May send forth plenteous tears to drown the world!
Ah, for my husband, for my dear lord Edward!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Alas for both, both mine, Edward and George!

GREY

Comfort, dear mother.

RIVERS

Sister, bethink you, like a careful mother,
Of your young son, the Prince of Wales.

Let the Prince of Wales be crowned.
In him your comfort lives.

(Enter Richard, followed by the Other
Lords.)

RICHARD

(to Elizabeth)

Sister, have comfort. All of us have cause
To wail the dimming of our shining star,
But none can help our harms by wailing them.

(to the Duchess of York)

Madam my mother, I did not see your Grace.

MARGARET

(aside)

“Keep it—keep it—till thy sins be ripe.”

RIVERS

Forthwith from Ludlow the young Prince be fet
Hither to London, with some little train,
And to be crowned our king.

RICHARD

Be it so, Lord Rivers and Lord Grey,
And go we to determine who they shall be
That straight shall post to Ludlow.

(Exeunt Richard, Rivers, Grey, and the
Other Lords, leaving the Duchess,
Elizabeth, and Young York.)

DUCHESS OF YORK

I long with all my heart to see the Prince.
I hope he is much grown since last I saw him.

ELIZABETH

But I hear no: they say Young York
Has almost overta'en him in his growth.

(Enter a Messenger.)

ELIZABETH

What news?

MESSENGER

Such news as grieves me to report.
Lord Rivers and Lord Grey are sent to Pomfret, prisoners.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Pomfret, Pomfret! Oh, thou bloody prison,
Fatal and ominous to noble peers!
The hour of death is expiate.

MARGARET

(aside)

“Rivers and Grey,
That none of you may live his natural age,
But by some unlooked accident cut off.”

DUCHESS OF YORK

Who hath committed them?

MESSENGER

The mighty Richard.

ELIZABETH

Now Margaret’s curse is fallen upon their heads,
For standing by when Richard stabbed her son!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Oh! Margaret! Margaret!

MARGARET

(aside)

“Keep it—keep it—till thy sins be ripe.”

ELIZABETH

Ay me! I see the ruin of my house.
Welcome, destruction, blood, and massacre.
I see, as in a map, the end of all.

DUCHESS OF YORK

Accursed and unquiet wrangling days,
How many of you have mine eyes beheld?
Oh, preposterous and frantic outrage, end thy damned
spleen,
Or let me die, to look on Earth no more.

ELIZABETH

And make me die, the thrall of Margaret's curse:
(Margaret, aside, speaking with her)
"Nor mother, wife, nor England's counted queen."

ELIZABETH

Come, come, my boy. We will to sanctuary.

DUCHESS

Stay, I will go with you.

ELIZABETH

You have no cause.

(Exeunt Elizabeth, Young York, the
Duchess of York, and the Messenger,
leaving Margaret alone.)

MARGARET

So now prosperity begins to mellow
And drop into the rotten mouth of death!

(Enter the Young Prince, now in his teens, escorted by the Richard and some of the Other Lords. Margaret, unseen, observes.)

RICHARD

Welcome, dear cousin, my thoughts' sovereign.
The weary way hath made you melancholy.

YOUNG PRINCE

I want more uncles here to welcome me.

RICHARD

Those uncles which you want were dangerous.
God keep you from them, and from such false friends.

YOUNG PRINCE

God keep me from false friends, but they were none.
I thought my mother and my brother York
Would long ere this have met us on the way.

RICHARD

If I may counsel you, some day or two
Your Highness shall repose you at the Tower.

YOUNG PRINCE

I do not like the Tower, of any place.

(Enter the Other Lords with Young York.)

YOUNG PRINCE

How fares our loving brother?

YOUNG YORK

Well, my dread lord—so must I call you now.

YOUNG PRINCE

Ay, brother, to our grief, as it is yours.

RICHARD

My lord, will it please you pass along?
Myself will to your mother to entreat of her
To meet you at the Tower and welcome you.

YOUNG YORK

What, will we go unto the Tower, my lord?

YOUNG PRINCE

My Lord Protector needs will have it so.

YOUNG YORK

I shall not sleep in quiet at the Tower.

RICHARD

Why, what should you fear?

YOUNG YORK

Marry, my uncle George's angry ghost.
My grandam told me he was murdered there.

YOUNG PRINCE

I fear no uncles dead.

(Enter the two Murderers, concealing
themselves, observed by Margaret.)

YOUNG PRINCE

But come, my lord. With a heavy heart,
Thinking on them, go we unto the Tower.

(Exeunt the Young Prince, Young
York, Richard, and the Other Lords.
The Murderers follow them, leaving
Margaret alone.)

MARGARET

"Thy son, that now is Prince of Wales,
For Ned, our son, that was Prince of Wales."

(Silence.

The Duchess and Elizabeth scream,
off.)

MARGARET

A dire induction am I witness to!
And will to France, hoping the consequence
Will prove as bitter, black, and tragical—
Who comes here?

(Margaret stands aside and observes.
Enter Elizabeth and the Duchess.)

ELIZABETH

Ah, my poor princes! Ah, my tender babes,
My unblown flowers, new-appearing sweets,
Hover about me with your airy wings
And hear your mother's lamentation.

MARGARET

(aside)

Hover about her. Say that right for right
Hath dimm'd your infant morn to aged night.

DUCHESS OF YORK

So many miseries have crazed my voice
That my woe-wearied tongue is still and mute.
Young Prince Plantagenet, why art thou dead?

MARGARET

(aside)

Plantagenet doth quit Plantagenet:
Prince for Prince pays a dying debt.

ELIZABETH

Wilt thou, oh God, fly from such gentle lambs
And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?

MARGARET

(aside)

When holy Henry died, and my sweet son.

DUCHESS OF YORK

(sinking to the ground)

Blind sight, dead life, poor mortal living ghost,
Woe's scene, world's shame, grave's due by life usurped,
Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,
Unlawfully made drunk with innocents' blood.

ELIZABETH

(sinking with her)

Oh, that thou wouldst as well afford a grave
As thou canst yield a melancholy seat.
Then would I hide my bones, not rest them here.
Oh, who hath any cause to mourn but I? . . .

(Margaret comes forward.)

ELIZABETH, DUCHESS, MARGARET

“Nor mother, wife, nor England's counted queen.”

ELIZABETH AND THE DUCHESS

Oh! Margaret! Margaret!

MARGARET

If ancient sorrow be most reverend,
Give mine the benefit of signiory
And let my griefs frown on the upper hand.

(to the Duchess)

From forth the kennel of thy womb hath crept
A hellhound that doth hunt us all to death.
Oh, upright, just, and true-disposing God,
How do I thank thee, that this carnal cur
Preys on the issue of his mother's body
And makes her pew-fellow with others' moan!

DUCHESS OF YORK

(rising)

Oh, Henry's wife, triumph not in my woes!
God witness with me, I have wept for thine.

MARGARET

I am hungry for revenge,
And now I cloy me with beholding it.

(to Elizabeth)

Thy Edward he is dead, that killed my Ned,
Your young Prince dead, to quit my Ned,
Your younger son's but boot, because both they
Matched not the high perfection of my loss.

(to the Duchess)
Thy George he is dead that stabbed my Ned.
(to both)
Richard yet lives: Hell's black intelligencer,
Only reserved, their factor, to buy souls
And send them thither.

ELIZABETH

(rising)
Oh, thou didst prophesy the time would come
That I should wish for thee to help me curse
That bottled spider, that foul bunch-backed toad.

MARGARET

Where is thy husband now? Where be thy brother?
Where are thy sons? Wherein dost thou joy?
Who sues and kneels and says "God save the Queen?"
Where be the bending peers that flattered thee?
Where be the thronging troops that followed thee?
Decline all this, and see what now thou art:
For happy wife, a most distressed widow.
For joyful mother, one that wails the name.
For one being sued to, one that humbly sues.
For queen, a very caitiff crowned with care.
For she that scorned at me, now scorned of me.
For she being feared of all, now fearing one.
For she commanding all, obeyed of none.
Thus hath the course of justice whirled about

And left thee but a very prey to time,
Having no more but thought of what thou wast
To torture thee the more, being what thou art.
Thou didst usurp my place, and dost thou not
Usurp the just proportion of my sorrow?
Now thy proud neck bears half my burdened yoke,
From which even here I slip my weary head
And leave the burden of it all on thee.
Farewell, York's wife, and queen of sad mischance.
These English woes shall make me smile in France.

(She turns to go.)

ELIZABETH

Oh, thou well-skilled in curses, stay awhile,
And teach me how to curse mine enemies.

DUCHESS OF YORK

And in the breath of bitter words let's smother
My damned son, which thy sweet sons smothered.

(Margaret stops.)

MARGARET

"If heaven have any grievous plague in store
Exceeding those that I can wish upon thee,
Oh, let them keep it—keep it!—till thy sins be ripe
And *then* hurl down their indignation
On thee, the troubler of the poor world's peace."

(She goes to them.)

MARGARET

Forbear to sleep the nights, and fast the days.
Compare dead happiness with living woe.
Think that thy babes were sweeter than they were,
And he that slew them fouler than he is.
Bettering thy loss makes the bad causer worse.
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse.

(Drumming, off.)

ELIZABETH

My words are dull. Oh, quicken them with thine!

MARGARET

Thy woes will make them sharp and pierce like mine.

(She stands aside and observes.

Enter Richard, crowned, with
drummers drumming, leading the Other
Lords to war. Elizabeth and the
Duchess block his way. The drummers
stop drumming.)

RICHARD

Who intercepts me in my expedition?

DUCHESS OF YORK

Oh, she that might have intercepted thee,
By strangling thee in her accursed womb,
From all the slaughters, wretch, that thou hast done.

ELIZABETH

Tell me, thou villain-slave, where are my children?

DUCHESS OF YORK

Thou toad, thou toad, where is thy brother George?

ELIZABETH

Where is the gentle Rivers and Grey?

RICHARD

(to the Drummers)

Strike alarum, drums.

Let not the heavens hear these telltale women

Rail on the Lord's anointed. Strike, I say!

(The drummers drum.)

DUCHESS OF YORK

I prithee, hear me speak!

RICHARD

Strike, I say!

(The drummers drum harder.)

DUCHESS OF YORK

(over the drumming)

Take with thee my most grievous curse,
Which in the day of battle tire thee more
Than all the complete armor that thou wear'st!

RICHARD

Strike, I say! Strike! Strike!

ELIZABETH

My prayers on the adverse party fight,
And there the little souls of Edward's children
Whisper the spirits of thine enemies!

RICHARD

Strike! Strike! Strike!

ELIZABETH

Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend!
Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end!

ELIZABETH

Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend!

RICHARD

(shrieking)

Strike! Strike! Strike!

DUCHESS OF YORK

Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end!

Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend!

ELIZABETH

Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end!

Shame serves thy life and doth thy death attend!

(together)

RICHARD

(sinking to the ground)

Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike!

Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike!

(The drummers stop drumming,

Silence.

Exit Queen Margaret.)

THE END

On Margaret's Revenge

I had the idea in 2013 and pitched it in 2014, just as a concept for workshopping, to Yale Rep and a few other resident theater companies, before realizing pretty quickly that I had to just go ahead and execute it. I didn't get to that until the summer of 2017. In '18, with the help of a good friend, I convened a table-read with a crew of great actors and got helpful and encouraging feedback from some generous theater professionals. In late '19, I gained the interest of a director whose work I admired, and in early '20, we were starting to pitch the script to repertory theaters as a directing project for her.

Then came COVID. Then came other pressing projects. Now, in 2026, I'm making the script available online and considering the possibilities.

For much of that time, I somehow managed to believe I was the only person who'd ever had the idea of collapsing the four plays in which Margaret appears into a full-scale play with Margaret in the lead. Then in 2019, to my dismay, I learned —surprise, surprise—that mine is not the only great mind to have conceived such an idea. There are, it turns out, other developments out there.

Since then, I've done what I can to get a sense of them. What's interesting is how different the various approaches

seem to be. Some are discursive, exploratory, maybe more literarily imaginative. Mine, I think, hews the hardest to being not literary and modern but an image of a Shakespeare play, if briefer and more concentrated than most. There's no riffing—no *me*, really. That was my intention, and it's what makes “The Revenge of Queen Margaret” feel, to me, at once radical and playable.

You can cut up Shakespeare pretty thoroughly. Here I've done a lot of violence to the original plays, and I mean a lot (more on that below). But it's still him, not me.

Lawrence Olivier's decision to cut Margaret entirely out of his great 1955 film adaptation of “Richard III” has irritated me since I first saw the film, in 1976, in David Young's Shakespeare course at Oberlin. Olivier must have wanted no actor or character to compete with his Richard, and I've since learned that he wasn't the first or last leading man or director to resort to eradicating the displaced queen. Ian McKellan's later R-III film follows the practice too. Stage productions had been cutting Margaret for generations.

Those choices inspired this work. It's widely thought that in R-III, Shakespeare began coming into his own as a writer of the history play. Conjuring a thoroughly Shakespearean political world for the first time, R-III's language is fresher and more memorable than that of the Henry VI plays, which most scholars see as preceding R-III not only in historical chronology but also in Shakespeare's

order of composition. While the playwright's artistic step forward originated, of course, in making the diabolical Richard the main character, a special linguistic energy arises from unleashing a character with nothing left but language: Margaret.

In an *intact* R-III, Margaret does compete with the protagonist. Not for official political power; for verbal, emotional, and incantatory intensity, for charisma, sheer theatricality, revenge. No longer capable of physical violence or military leadership, she channels her fury and grief into vindictive speech, the art and power of cursing, not as profanity but as punishing charm, which becomes one of the play's themes. That the aged Margaret is powerful enough to wreak vengeance on every one of her enemies—and that she does so only by speaking—must have excited a playwright still gaining command of his powers.

Some theatergoers and writers have liked Margaret's scenes in R-III best of all. Maybe that's why Olivier and others have erased those scenes. Poking into all this, I've found the scholar Marliss C. Desens arguing that Olivier's film hollows out the play's other women too, thus removing the regard for women's struggles for and against power, that mark Shakespeare's original. That's a loss reflecting not only Olivier's sensibility but also the general

conditions for putting Shakespeare on screen in the year, I'll note for what it's worth, that I was born.

* * * *

“The Revenge of Queen Margaret” is figuratively a discovery a “lost” Shakespeare work, but it's also literally a discovery, in that I didn't know what was going to happen when I began carrying out my plan.

The plan itself was as simple as can be: Invert Olivier's move, by cutting wholesale and without compunction out of H-VI (1/2/3) and R-III, the four plays in which she appears, everything that *isn't* about Margaret. Because the prime directive was to not care how it came out, the assignment was the most straightforward I've ever given myself.

Fulfilling the assignment, though, took on a life of its own. I knew R-III very well, some of it by heart, but my knowledge of the three H-VI plays was so weak that I'm not sure I'd even read all of them through before I started plundering them for this one. I did know the Joan scenes from 1, the Jack Cade material from 2, and some of Richard's speeches from 3. When I was a little kid, my father watched what I later learned was a BBC television

series that combined and integrated the full H-VI cycle with R-III—but all I remember about my glimpses at the Philco is a grainy black-and-white pageant, remote, vaguely creepy. I wondered why my dad or anyone would watch it (now I know it had Peggy Ashcroft as Margaret).

When I got going on this project, that is, I was by no means clear on all of the chaotic back-and-forth involved in Shakespeare's first Henry sequence. There's been revisionism lately, but for most of my life, the H-VI plays have been widely viewed as weak Shakespeare, not necessarily worth teaching at the nonspecialist level (though directors have mounted interesting productions). Scholars have long doubted the provenance of H-VI-1 and describe the other two plays in the trilogy as too declamatory and bloody to show much early distinction in their author. The issue was recently taken all the way by the New Oxford Shakespeare's decision to credit Christopher Marlowe as Shakespeare's co-author for the whole H-VI trilogy. Not necessarily great for Marlowe, since many have expressed little admiration for the plays.

But I didn't have to consider any of that. In fact, I couldn't. However predictably bad or surprisingly good various parts of the Henry plays might seem to me, however likely some parts were or were not written by the author of the other parts, my rule for cutting kept me from acting on the basis of any critical judgment or scholarly research and required

me only to retain everything about Margaret and lose everything else. She would thus get her revenge. Not only as she does at the end of R-III, and not only against her enemies in the English dynastic wars, but in every scene of her long career, from youth to age. Revenge against all those who cut her out.

* * * *

I bill Shakespeare as the author of this play. In real life, of course, The “Revenge of Queen Margaret” is what’s known as a radical adaptation. The authorship conceit is meant to underscore another rule of my discovery process: *No new language*.

No interpolations of faux-Shakespearian verse. No separate literary sources, even from the period. No historical facts. No elaborations by me. No concocting spoken material in hopes of easing transitions, clarifying motives, or conjuring sympathy for characters who otherwise might seem “unrelatable.” That’s what I still like about my way of handling a concept that I was way wrong in thinking was original with me.

But because I didn’t know beforehand what would stay and go, and what the emerging script would look like, I found

myself making a series of big moves, on the fly and on multiple levels, that went far beyond the wholesale cutting of everything not about Margaret. I insist on seeing these choices, however many, and however radical, as more dramaturgical and even directorial than authorial. For the record, I note them here in general terms:

- Along with simply expunging huge chunks of the original four plays, I've sliced and diced and mixed and matched what's left, cutting, eliding, combining, and fracturing lines, speeches, whole scenes, entire incidents. All of the language had to come from somewhere in the original four plays, and from nowhere else, but the new story's development occurs on tracks other than those in the originals and operates on different schedules. My scorched-earth demolition of the non-Margaret material left much of the surviving speech and action without context, so I endowed myself with an inalienable right to re-structure at will, collapsing multiple scenes into single scenes, moving lines from one scene to another, moving lines in one speech to an earlier position in that same speech, etc.

A minor example, occurring in the second scene here, where Henry complains about the pressures of kingship ("No sooner was I crept out of my cradle. . ."). His lines

originally appear in HVI-2. The scene in which they appear here is drawn from HVI-3. Another example: Because the Yorkist brothers' famous vision of three suns doesn't appear in "The Revenge of Queen Margaret," Richard's remark to Edward "You love the breeder better than the male," too good to lose, appears here in the scene in which Edward decides to marry Elizabeth Grey. Readers who know the whole H-VI/R-III sequence will find that sort of violence on nearly every page of this play. Re-centering everything around the queen turned out to have its own prerogatives and requirements, not to be finessed.

- Another set of changes might seem more conventional. These are significant cuts simply to streamline action and avoid repetitiveness. I don't think such changes go much farther what any director might do, for any Shakespeare production, especially a production of the notably longwinded H-VI plays, with their proliferating similes and boilerplate classical allusions.

Still, many of my cuts go way beyond trimming text. They radically simplify plot, on the basis solely of what's important to Margaret and her story, and only to Margaret and her story. It's not important, for example, that the Duke of York's first scheme of rebellion involves confusing Jack Cade with Lord Mortimer; that's one of many areas where I dropped a story point early on. But then I realized the great Jack Cade sequence isn't important either. (!) I also

decided, in the end, that it's not important to show the audience exactly how Suffolk meets his end; the implication here may be that York killed Suffolk, and that's fine. The play involves many such examples of changes to basic plotting.

On a more granular level, I've revised some individual lines, mainly by assigning characters a single name—Gloucester is always called Gloucester, never Humphrey; Suffolk always Suffolk, never Pole—and I've snagged lines of direct address—"Uncle of Gloucester"—and occasional exposition—"over to England"—from one of the four plays and inserted them wherever I've felt an audience might need to know who's who or what's what. The violence there is mainly to the verse.

I've also given characters' lines to other characters (including to Margaret). Warwick joins York in the scenes where Joan is captured and killed. Warwick and York share what were originally Richard's lines in the burning of Joan. Richard gets a line originally Joan's. There are many others examples.

- Especially glaring, for those who know the originals, may be deletions of entire characters—not just Jack Cade. Talbot, Clifford, Oxford, Northumberland, and others play critically important roles in H-VI but no role at all in Margaret's story; so they're gone, and Margaret nabs some

of their best lines. The removal of Lady Anne went down less easily, given this play's focus on women's struggles and Anne's famous scene in R-III, but Anne and Margaret never interact in the originals, so goodbye Anne, because in this, Margaret's play, Margaret's son has no wife, which might suit her just fine, for now, though she would want him to marry and sire an heir to the throne sooner rather than later.

Some characters with names in the original sequence—Buckingham is an example—are absorbed here in the nameless court known simply as The Other Lords. When those lords must speak and take action, they are singled out as First Other Lord and Second Other Lord, new and uptight courtiers. One major character here is a rank composite: Northford, existing neither in the original plays nor in the real peerage, recombined from the originals' Northumberland, Clifford, and Oxford to give Margaret just one staunch ally. He gets a nice arc. The violence in this case is not only to Shakespeare but also to history.

So no new language. But original language put to many new uses not intended by the original author.

- Then there are my stage directions. Some are tossed in here and there—(Warwick goes to Henry, the placement of warring court factions on opposite sides of the throne)—to underscore relations among characters and groups of characters. These are crude gambits intended only to

convey, to readers, very broad ideas that await actual directing.

Stage directions do heavier lifting when introducing the Duchess of York and the Duchess of Gloucester. The magic of word processing places them in scenes they weren't in before. A related move introduces young Rutland and shows York's special fondness for him. I do that kind of pseudo-directing from the keyboard to override Shakespeare's characteristic abruptness in introducing historical characters.

I employ a similar ruse for introducing and tracking Margaret's and Henry's prince. Known here only as Ned (Margaret's diminutive for him in the originals), in order to eliminate confusion with Edward of York, he appears here well before he has any lines, first in utero, then as a baby, then as an early adolescent. When he does begin speaking, I've had to make him somewhat younger than he is in the original.

My most extreme invention takes the stage-direction trick all the way. In Act Five, which is a barest-bones R-III, Margaret observes much of the action, unseen by other characters. From that, I learned something. Margaret doesn't *know* she has the power to curse people to death, until the curses start coming true before her eyes. That's Shakespeare, but it's never been so obvious to me before

that, as originally written, Richard can be seen as nothing, throughout his whole play, nothing, nothing at all, but the director Margaret's unwitting agent.

- Because "The Revenge of Queen Margaret" has to end when Shakespeare removes Margaret from the action, I've given the queen a climax straight out of the Shakespeare original, though not treated by Shakespeare as a climax: her arming Elizabeth and the Duchess of York with instructions for how to curse and then siccing them on Richard to bring him down after he's done her work. In that sense, the play is a play of its own—and it's Margaret's revenge.

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