

The Life and Death of Richard the Third

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SCENE IV. The Tower of London.

Enter BUCKINGHAM, DERBY, HASTINGS, the BISHOP OF ELY, RATCLIFF, LOVEL, with others, and take their seats at a table

HASTINGS

My lords, at once: the cause why we are met
Is, to determine of the coronation.
In God's name, speak: when is the royal day?

BUCKINGHAM

Are all things fitting for that royal time?

DERBY

It is, and wants but nomination.

BISHOP OF ELY

To-morrow, then, I judge a happy day.

BUCKINGHAM

Who knows the lord protector's mind herein?
Who is most inward with the royal duke?

BISHOP OF ELY

Your grace, we think, should soonest know his mind.

BUCKINGHAM

Who, I, my lord I we know each other's faces,
But for our hearts, he knows no more of mine,
Than I of yours;
Nor I no more of his, than you of mine.
Lord Hastings, you and he are near in love.

HASTINGS

I thank his grace, I know he loves me well;
But, for his purpose in the coronation.
I have not sounded him, nor he deliver'd
His gracious pleasure any way therein:
But you, my noble lords, may name the time;

And in the duke's behalf I'll give my voice,
Which, I presume, he'll take in gentle part.

Enter GLOUCESTER

BISHOP OF ELY

Now in good time, here comes the duke himself.

GLOUCESTER

My noble lords and cousins all, good morrow.
I have been long a sleeper; but, I hope,
My absence doth neglect no great designs,
Which by my presence might have been concluded.

BUCKINGHAM

Had not you come upon your cue, my lord
William Lord Hastings had pronounced your part,--
I mean, your voice,--for crowning of the king.

GLOUCESTER

Than my Lord Hastings no man might be bolder;
His lordship knows me well, and loves me well.

HASTINGS

I thank your grace.

GLOUCESTER

My lord of Ely!

BISHOP OF ELY

My lord?

GLOUCESTER

When I was last in Holborn,
I saw good strawberries in your garden there
I do beseech you send for some of them.

BISHOP OF ELY

Marry, and will, my lord, with all my heart.

Exit

GLOUCESTER

Cousin of Buckingham, a word with you.

Drawing him aside

Catesby hath sounded Hastings in our business,
And finds the testy gentleman so hot,
As he will lose his head ere give consent
His master's son, as worshipful as he terms it,
Shall lose the royalty of England's throne.

BUCKINGHAM

Withdraw you hence, my lord, I'll follow you.

Exit GLOUCESTER, BUCKINGHAM following

DERBY

We have not yet set down this day of triumph.
To-morrow, in mine opinion, is too sudden;
For I myself am not so well provided
As else I would be, were the day prolong'd.

Re-enter BISHOP OF ELY

BISHOP OF ELY

Where is my lord protector? I have sent for these
strawberries.

HASTINGS

His grace looks cheerfully and smooth to-day;
There's some conceit or other likes him well,
When he doth bid good morrow with such a spirit.
I think there's never a man in Christendom
That can less hide his love or hate than he;
For by his face straight shall you know his heart.

DERBY

What of his heart perceive you in his face
By any likelihood he show'd to-day?

HASTINGS

Marry, that with no man here he is offended;
For, were he, he had shown it in his looks.

DERBY

I pray God he be not, I say.

GLOUCESTER

I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
That do conspire my death with devilish plots
Of damned witchcraft, and that have prevail'd
Upon my body with their hellish charms?

HASTINGS

The tender love I bear your grace, my lord,
Makes me most forward in this noble presence
To doom the offenders, whatsoever they be
I say, my lord, they have deserved death.

GLOUCESTER

Then be your eyes the witness of this ill:
See how I am bewitch'd; behold mine arm
Is, like a blasted sapling, wither'd up:
And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,
Consorted with that harlot strumpet Shore,
That by their witchcraft thus have marked me.

HASTINGS

If they have done this thing, my gracious lord--

GLOUCESTER

If I thou protector of this damned strumpet--
Tellet thou me of 'ifs'? Thou art a traitor:
Off with his head! Now, by Saint Paul I swear,
I will not dine until I see the same.
Lovel and Ratcliff, look that it be done:
The rest, that love me, rise and follow me.

Exeunt all but HASTINGS, RATCLIFF, and LOVEL

HASTINGS

Woe, woe for England! not a whit for me;
For I, too fond, might have prevented this.
Stanley did dream the boar did raze his helm;
But I disdain'd it, and did scorn to fly:
Three times to-day my foot-cloth horse did stumble,
And startled, when he look'd upon the Tower,
As loath to bear me to the slaughter-house.
O, now I want the priest that spake to me:
I now repent I told the pursuivant
As 'twere triumphing at mine enemies,
How they at Pomfret bloodily were butcher'd,

And I myself secure in grace and favour.
O Margaret, Margaret, now thy heavy curse
Is lighted on poor Hastings' wretched head!

RATCLIFF

Dispatch, my lord; the duke would be at dinner:
Make a short shrift; he longs to see your head.

HASTINGS

O momentary grace of mortal men,
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God!
Who builds his hopes in air of your good looks,
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,
Ready, with every nod, to tumble down
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.

LOVEL

Come, come, dispatch; 'tis bootless to exclaim.

HASTINGS

O bloody Richard! miserable England!
I prophesy the fearful'st time to thee
That ever wretched age hath look'd upon.
Come, lead me to the block; bear him my head.
They smile at me that shortly shall be dead.

Exeunt

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