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King Richard II

William Shakespeare

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: William Shakespeare

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-6949-7

www.tredition.com

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THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD THE SECOND

by William Shakespeare

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING RICHARD THE SECOND

JOHN OF GAUNT, Duke of Lancaster - uncle to the King

EDMUND LANGLEY, Duke of York - uncle to the King

HENRY, surnamed BOLINGBROKE, Duke of Hereford, son of
John of Gaunt, afterwards King Henry IV

DUKE OF AUMERLE, son of the Duke of York

THOMAS MOWBRAY, Duke of Norfolk

DUKE OF SURREY

EARL OF SALISBURY

LORD BERKELEY

BUSHY - Servant to King Richard

BAGOT - Servant to King Richard

GREEN - Servant to King Richard

EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND

HENRY PERCY, surnamed Hotspur, his son

LORD ROSS

LORD WILLOUGHBY

LORD FITZWATER

BISHOP OF CARLISLE

ABBOT OF WESTMINSTER

LORD MARSHAL

SIR PIERCE OF EXTON

SIR STEPHEN SCROOP

Captain of a band of Welshmen

QUEEN TO KING RICHARD

DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

DUCHESS OF YORK

Lady attending on the Queen

Lords, Heralds, Officers, Soldiers, Gardeners, Keeper, Messenger,
Groom, and other Attendants

SCENE: Dispersedly in England and Wales.

ACT 1

SCENE I. London. A Room in the palace.

[Enter KING RICHARD, attended; JOHN OF GAUNT, with other NOBLES.]

KING RICHARD.

Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster,
Hast thou, according to thy oath and band,
Brought hither Henry Hereford thy bold son,
Here to make good the boisterous late appeal,
Which then our leisure would not let us hear,
Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray?

GAUNT.

I have, my liege.

KING RICHARD.

Tell me, moreover, hast thou sounded him
If he appeal the Duke on ancient malice,
Or worthily, as a good subject should,
On some known ground of treachery in him?

GAUNT.

As near as I could sift him on that argument,
On some apparent danger seen in him
Aim'd at your Highness, no inveterate malice.

KING RICHARD.

Then call them to our presence: face to face
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
The accuser and the accused freely speak.

High-stomach'd are they both and full of ire,
In rage, deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.

[Re-enter Attendants, with BOLINGBROKE and MOWBRAY.]

BOLINGBROKE.

Many years of happy days befall
My gracious sovereign, my most loving liege!

MOWBRAY.

Each day still better other's happiness
Until the heavens, envying earth's good hap,
Add an immortal title to your crown!

KING RICHARD.

We thank you both; yet one but flatters us,
As well appeareth by the cause you come;
Namely, to appeal each other of high treason.
Cousin of Hereford, what dost thou object
Against the Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Mowbray?

BOLINGBROKE.

First,—heaven be the record to my speech!—
In the devotion of a subject's love,
Tendering the precious safety of my prince,
And free from other misbegotten hate,
Come I appelliant to this princely presence.
Now, Thomas Mowbray, do I turn to thee,
And mark my greeting well; for what I speak
My body shall make good upon this earth,
Or my divine soul answer it in heaven.
Thou art a traitor and a miscreant;
Too good to be so and too bad to live,
Since the more fair and crystal is the sky,
The uglier seem the clouds that in it fly.
Once more, the more to aggravate the note,
With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat;
And wish, so please my sovereign, ere I move,

What my tongue speaks, my right drawn sword may prove.

MOWBRAY.

Let not my cold words here accuse my zeal:
'Tis not the trial of a woman's war,
The bitter clamour of two eager tongues,
Can arbitrate this cause betwixt us twain;
The blood is hot that must be cool'd for this.
Yet can I not of such tame patience boast
As to be hush'd and nought at all to say.
First, the fair reverence of your highness curbs me
From giving reins and spurs to my free speech;
Which else would post until it had return'd
These terms of treason doubled down his throat.
Setting aside his high blood's royalty,
And let him be no kinsman to my liege,
I do defy him, and I spit at him,
Call him a slanderous coward and a villain:
Which to maintain, I would allow him odds
And meet him, were I tied to run afoot
Even to the frozen ridges of the Alps,
Or any other ground inhabitable,
Wherever Englishman durst set his foot.
Meantime let this defend my loyalty:
By all my hopes, most falsely doth he lie.

BOLINGBROKE.

Pale trembling coward, there I throw my gage,
Disclaiming here the kindred of the king;
And lay aside my high blood's royalty,
Which fear, not reverence, makes thee to except:
If guilty dread have left thee so much strength
As to take up mine honour's pawn, then stoop:
By that, and all the rites of knighthood else,
Will I make good against thee, arm to arm,
What I have spoke or thou canst worst devise.

MOWBRAY.

I take it up; and by that sword I swear

Which gently laid my knighthood on my shoulder,
I'll answer thee in any fair degree,
Or chivalrous design of knightly trial:
And when I mount, alive may I not light
If I be traitor or unjustly fight!

KING RICHARD.

What doth our cousin lay to Mowbray's charge?
It must be great that can inherit us
So much as of a thought of ill in him.

BOLINGBROKE.

Look, what I speak, my life shall prove it true;
That Mowbray hath receiv'd eight thousand nobles
In name of lendings for your highness' soldiers,
The which he hath detain'd for lewd employments,
Like a false traitor and injurious villain.
Besides, I say and will in battle prove,
Or here, or elsewhere to the furthest verge
That ever was survey'd by English eye,
That all the treasons for these eighteen years
Complotted and contrived in this land,
Fetch from false Mowbray their first head and spring.
Further I say, and further will maintain
Upon his bad life to make all this good,
That he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death,
Suggest his soon-believing adversaries,
And consequently, like a traitor coward,
Sluic'd out his innocent soul through streams of blood:
Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries,
Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
To me for justice and rough chastisement;
And, by the glorious worth of my descent,
This arm shall do it, or this life be spent.

KING RICHARD.

How high a pitch his resolution soars!
Thomas of Norfolk, what say'st thou to this?

MOWBRAY.

O! let my sovereign turn away his face
And bid his ears a little while be deaf,
Till I have told this slander of his blood
How God and good men hate so foul a liar.

KING RICHARD.

Mowbray, impartial are our eyes and ears:
Were he my brother, nay, my kingdom's heir, —
As he is but my father's brother's son, —
Now, by my sceptre's awe I make a vow,
Such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood
Should nothing privilege him nor partialize
The unstooping firmness of my upright soul.
He is our subject, Mowbray; so art thou:
Free speech and fearless I to thee allow.

MOWBRAY.

Then, Bolingbroke, as low as to thy heart,
Through the false passage of thy throat, thou liest.
Three parts of that receipt I had for Calais
Disburs'd I duly to his highness' soldiers;
The other part reserv'd I by consent,
For that my sovereign liege was in my debt
Upon remainder of a dear account,
Since last I went to France to fetch his queen.
Now swallow down that lie. For Gloucester's death,
I slew him not; but to my own disgrace
Neglected my sworn duty in that case.
For you, my noble Lord of Lancaster,
The honourable father to my foe,
Once did I lay an ambush for your life,
A trespass that doth vex my grieved soul;
But ere I last receiv'd the sacrament
I did confess it, and exactly begg'd
Your Grace's pardon; and I hope I had it.
This is my fault: as for the rest appeal'd,
It issues from the rancour of a villain,
A recreant and most degenerate traitor;

Which in myself I boldly will defend,
And interchangeably hurl down my gage
Upon this overweening traitor's foot,
To prove myself a loyal gentleman
Even in the best blood chamber'd in his bosom.
In haste whereof, most heartily I pray
Your highness to assign our trial day.

KING RICHARD.

Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be rul'd by me;
Let's purge this choler without letting blood:
This we prescribe, though no physician;
Deep malice makes too deep incision:
Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed,
Our doctors say this is no month to bleed.
Good uncle, let this end where it begun;
We'll calm the Duke of Norfolk, you your son.

GAUNT.

To be a make-peace shall become my age:
Throw down, my son, the Duke of Norfolk's gage.

KING RICHARD.

And, Norfolk, throw down his.

GAUNT.

When, Harry, when?
Obedience bids I should not bid again.

KING RICHARD.

Norfolk, throw down; we bid;
There is no boot.

MOWBRAY.

Myself I throw, dread sovereign, at thy foot.
My life thou shalt command, but not my shame:
The one my duty owes; but my fair name,—
Despite of death, that lives upon my grave,—
To dark dishonour's use thou shalt not have.

I am disgrac'd, impeach'd, and baffled here;
Pierc'd to the soul with slander's venom'd spear,
The which no balm can cure but his heart-blood
Which breath'd this poison.

KING RICHARD.

Rage must be withstood:
Give me his gage: lions make leopards tame.

MOWBRAY.

Yea, but not change his spots: take but my shame,
And I resign my gage. My dear dear lord,
The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation; that away,
Men are but gilded loam or painted clay.
A jewel in a ten-times barr'd-up chest
Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast.
Mine honour is my life; both grow in one;
Take honour from me, and my life is done:
Then, dear my liege, mine honour let me try;
In that I live, and for that will I die.

KING RICHARD.

Cousin, throw down your gage: do you begin.

BOLINGBROKE.

O! God defend my soul from such deep sin.
Shall I seem crest-fall'n in my father's sight,
Or with pale beggar-fear impeach my height
Before this outdar'd dastard? Ere my tongue
Shall wound my honour with such feeble wrong
Or sound so base a parle, my teeth shall tear
The slavish motive of recanting fear,
And spit it bleeding in his high disgrace,
Where shame doth harbour, even in Mowbray's face.

[Exit GAUNT.]

KING RICHARD.

We were not born to sue, but to command:
Which since we cannot do to make you friends,
Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,
At Coventry, upon Saint Lambert's day:
There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
The swelling difference of your settled hate:
Since we can not atone you, we shall see
Justice design the victor's chivalry.
Lord Marshal, command our officers-at-arms
Be ready to direct these home alarms.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. The same. A room in the DUKE OF LANCASTER'S palace.

[Enter GAUNT and DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER.]

GAUNT.

Alas, the part I had in Woodstock's blood
Doth more solicit me than your exclams,
To stir against the butchers of his life.
But since correction lieth in those hands
Which made the fault that we cannot correct,
Put we our quarrel to the will of heaven;
Who, when they see the hours ripe on earth,
Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.

DUCHESS.

Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur?
Hath love in thy old blood no living fire?
Edward's seven sons, whereof thyself art one,
Were as seven vials of his sacred blood,
Or seven fair branches springing from one root:
Some of those seven are dried by nature's course,
Some of those branches by the Destinies cut;
But Thomas, my dear lord, my life, my Gloucester,
One vial full of Edward's sacred blood,
One flourishing branch of his most royal root,
Is crack'd, and all the precious liquor spilt;
Is hack'd down, and his summer leaves all vaded,
By envy's hand and murder's bloody axe.
Ah, Gaunt! his blood was thine: that bed, that womb,
That metal, that self-mould, that fashion'd thee,
Made him a man; and though thou liv'st and breath'st,
Yet art thou slain in him: thou dost consent
In some large measure to thy father's death
In that thou seest thy wretched brother die,
Who was the model of thy father's life.
Call it not patience, Gaunt; it is despair:

In suffering thus thy brother to be slaughter'd,
Thou showest the naked pathway to thy life,
Teaching stern murder how to butcher thee:
That which in mean men we entitle patience
Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.
What shall I say? To safeguard thine own life,
The best way is to venge my Gloucester's death.

GAUNT.

God's is the quarrel; for God's substitute,
His deputy anointed in his sight,
Hath caus'd his death; the which if wrongfully,
Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift
An angry arm against his minister.

DUCHESS.

Where then, alas! may I complain myself?

GAUNT.

To God, the widow's champion and defence.

DUCHESS.

Why then, I will. Farewell, old Gaunt.
Thou go'st to Coventry, there to behold
Our cousin Hereford and fell Mowbray fight:
O! sit my husband's wrongs on Hereford's spear,
That it may enter butcher Mowbray's breast.
Or, if misfortune miss the first career,
Be Mowbray's sins so heavy in his bosom
That they may break his foaming courser's back,
And throw the rider headlong in the lists,
A caitiff recreant to my cousin Hereford!
Farewell, old Gaunt: thy sometimes brother's wife
With her companion, Grief, must end her life.

GAUNT.

Sister, farewell; I must to Coventry.
As much good stay with thee as go with me!

DUCHESS.

Yet one word more. Grief boundeth where it falls,
Not with the empty hollowness, but weight:
I take my leave before I have begun,
For sorrow ends not when it seemeth done.
Commend me to thy brother, Edmund York.
Lo! this is all: nay, yet depart not so;
Though this be all, do not so quickly go;
I shall remember more. Bid him — ah, what? —
With all good speed at Plashy visit me.
Alack! and what shall good old York there see
But empty lodgings and unfurnish'd walls,
Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones?
And what hear there for welcome but my groans?
Therefore commend me; let him not come there,
To seek out sorrow that dwells every where.
Desolate, desolate, will I hence and die:
The last leave of thee takes my weeping eye.

[Exeunt.]

