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 William Shakespeare
 Excerpt
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‘THE TRAGEDY OF
 RICHARD THE THIRD
*with the landing of Earl Richmond and
 the Battle at Bosworth Field*

[1. 1.] *London. A street*

‘*Enter RICHARD, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, solus*’

Gloucester. Now is the winter of our discontent
 Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
 And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
 In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
 Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
 Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
 Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings;
 Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
 Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front;
 And now, instead of mounting barbéd steeds 10
 To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
 He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
 To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
 But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
 Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
 I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
 I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
 Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time 20
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;

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Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
 Have no delight to pass away the time,
 Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
 And descant on mine own deformity:
 And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
 30 I am determinéd to prove a villain
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
 Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
 By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
 To set my brother Clarence and the king
 In deadly hate the one against the other:
 And if King Edward be as true and just
 As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up,
 About a prophecy, which says that G
 40 Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.
 Dive, thoughts, down to my soul—here Clarence comes.

*Enter CLARENCE, guarded, and BRAKENBURY,
 Lieutenant of the Tower*

Brother, good day: what means this arméd guard
 That waits upon your grace?

Clarence. His majesty,
 Tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed
 This conduct to convey me to the Tower.

Gloucester. Upon what cause?

Clarence. Because my name is George.

Gloucester. Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours;
 He should, for that, commit your godfathers:
 Belike his majesty hath some intent
 50 That you should be new-christ'ned in the Tower.
 But what's the matter, Clarence? may I know?
Clarence. Yea, Richard, when I know; for I protest

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1.1.53 RICHARD THE THIRD 7

As yet I do not: but, as I can learn,
 He hearkens after prophecies and dreams;
 And from the cross-row plucks the letter G,
 And says a wizard told him that by G
 His issue disinherited should be;
 And, for my name of George begins with G,
 It follows in his thought that I am he.
 These, as I learn, and such like toys as these 60
 Hath moved his highness to commit me now.

Gloucester. Why, this it is, when men are ruled
 by women:

'Tis not the king that sends you to the Tower;
 My Lady Grey his wife, Clarence, 'tis she
 That tempers him to this extremity.
 Was it not she, and that good man of worship,
 Anthony Woodeville, her brother there,
 That made him send Lord Hastings to the Tower,
 From whence this present day he is delivered?
 We are not safe, Clarence, we are not safe. 70

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

Gloucester. Humbly complaining to her deity
 Got my Lord Chamberlain his liberty.
 I'll tell you what, I think it is our way
 If we will keep in favour with the king,
 To be her men and wear her livery. 80
 The jealous o'erworn widow and herself,
 Since that our brother dubbed them gentlewomen,
 Are mighty gossips in our monarchy.

Brakenbury. Beseech your graces both to pardon me;
 His majesty hath straitly given in charge

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That no man shall have private conference
 (Of what degree soever) with his brother.

Gloucester. Even so; an't please your
 worship, Brakenbury,

You may partake of any thing we say:

90 We speak no treason, man: we say the king
 Is wise and virtuous, and his noble queen
 Well struck in years, fair, and not jealous;
 We say that Shore's wife hath a pretty foot,
 A cherry lip, a bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue;
 And that the queen's kin are made gentle-folks:
 How say you, sir? can you deny all this?

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

Gloucester. Naught to do with Mistress Shore! I tell
 thee fellow,

He that doth naught with her (excepting one)

100 Were best to do it secretly, alone.

Brakenbury. What one, my lord?

Gloucester. Her husband, knave: wouldst thou
 betray me?

Brakenbury. I do beseech your grace to pardon me:
 Forbear your conference with the noble duke.

Clarence. We know thy charge, Brakenbury, and
 will obey.

Gloucester. We are the queen's objects, and
 must obey.

Brother, farewell: I will unto the king;
 And whatsoever you will employ me in,
 Were it to call King Edward's widow sister,

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

Clarence. I know it pleaseth neither of us well.

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I. I. II4 RICHARD THE THIRD 9

Gloucester. Well, your imprisonment shall not
 be long;

I will deliver you, or else lie for you:
 Meantime, have patience.

Clarence. I must perforce. Farewell.

[*Clarence, Brakenbury, and the Guard pass on*

Gloucester. Go, tread the path that thou shalt
 ne'er return:

Simple, plain Clarence, I do love thee so,
 That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
 If heaven will take the present at our hands.

120

But who comes here? the new-deliveréd Hastings?

'*Enter LORD HASTINGS*'

Hastings. Good time of day unto my gracious lord!

Gloucester. As much unto my good Lord Chamberlain!
 Well are you welcome to the open air.

How hath your lordship brooked imprisonment?

Hastings. With patience, noble lord, as
 prisoners must:

But I shall live, my lord, to give them thanks
 That were the cause of my imprisonment.

Gloucester. No doubt, no doubt; and so shall
 Clarence too;

For they that were your enemies are his,
 And have prevailed as much on him as you.

130

Hastings. More pity that the eagles should
 be mewed,

Whiles kites and buzzards prey at liberty.

Gloucester. What news abroad?

Hastings. No news so bad abroad as this
 at home:

The king is sickly, weak, and melancholy,
 And his physicians fear him mightily.

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10 RICHARD THE THIRD 1.1.138

Gloucester. Now, by Saint John, that news is
 bad indeed.

O, he hath kept an evil diet long,
 140 And overmuch consumed his royal person:
 'Tis very grievous to be thought upon.
 Where is he, in his bed?

Hastings. He is.

Gloucester. Go you before, and I will follow you.
[Hastings departs]

He cannot live, I hope; and must not die
 Till George be packed with post-horse up to heaven.
 I'll in, to urge his hatred more to Clarence
 With lies well steeled with weighty arguments;
 And, if I fail not in my deep intent,
 150 Clarence hath not another day to live:
 Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy,
 And leave the world for me to bustle in!
 For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.
 What though I killed her husband and her father?
 The readiest way to make the wench amends
 Is to become her husband and her father:
 The which will I; not all so much for love
 As for another secret close intent
 By marrying her which I must reach unto.
 160 But yet I run before my horse to market:
 Clarence still breathes; Edward still lives and reigns:
 When they are gone, then must I count my gains.

[he goes]

[1. 2.] *'Enter the corpse of HENRY the Sixth, with halberds to guard it; LADY ANNE being the mourner', attended by Tressel and Berkeley*

Anne. Set down, set down your honourable load—
 If honour may be shrouded in a hearse—

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1.2.3 RICHARD THE THIRD 11

Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
 Th'untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
 Poor key-cold figure of a holy king!
 Pale ashes of the house of Lancaster!
 Thou bloodless remnant of that royal blood!
 Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost,
 To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
 Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaught'ed son, 10
 Stabbed by the selfsame hand that made these wounds!
 Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life
 I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.
 O curséd be the hand that made these holes!
 Curséd the blood that let this blood from hence!
 Curséd the heart that had the heart to do it!
 More direful hap betide that hated wretch
 That makes us wretched by the death of thee
 Than I can wish to wolves—to spiders, toads,
 Or any creeping venoméd thing that lives! 20
 If ever he have child, abortive be it,
 Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
 Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
 May fright the hopeful mother at the view;
 And that be heir to his unhappiness!
 If ever he have wife, let her be made
 More miserable by the life of him
 Than I am by my young lord's death and thee!
 Come, now towards Chertsey with your holy load,
 Taken from Paul's to be interréd there; 30
 And still, as you are weary of this weight,
 Rest you, whiles I lament King Henry's corse.

'Enter RICHARD, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER'

Gloucester. Stay, you that bear the corse, and set
 it down.

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12 RICHARD THE THIRD 1.2.34

Anne. What black magician conjures up this fiend,
 To stop devoted charitable deeds?

Gloucester. Villains, set down the corse; or, by
 Saint Paul,

I'll make a corse of him that disobeys.

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

Gloucester. Unmannered dog! stand thou, when
 I command:

40 Advance thy halberd higher than my breast,
 Or, by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot,
 And spurn upon thee, beggar, for thy boldness.

Anne. What, do you tremble? are you all afraid?
 Alas, I blame you not, for you are mortal,
 And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.
 Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell!

Thou hadst but power over his mortal body,
 His soul thou canst not have; therefore, be gone.

Gloucester. Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst.

50 *Anne.* Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and trouble
 us not,

For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
 Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclams.
 If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
 Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.

O, gentlemen, see, see! dead Henry's wounds
 Open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh.
 Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity;
 For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
 From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;

60 Thy deeds, inhuman and unnatural,
 Provokes this deluge most unnatural.

O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death!

O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death!

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1.2.64 RICHARD THE THIRD 13

Either, heaven, with lightning strike the murd'rer dead,
 Or earth, gape open wide and eat him quick,
 As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood,
 Which his hell-governed arm hath butcheréd!

Gloucester. Lady, you know no rules of charity,
 Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.

Anne. Villain, thou know'st no law of God nor man. 70
 No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

Gloucester. But I know none, and therefore am
 no beast.

Anne. O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!

Gloucester. More wonderful, when angels are
 so angry.

Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,
 Of these supposed crimes, to give me leave,
 By circumstance, but to acquit myself.

Anne. Vouchsafe, diffused infection of a man,
 Of these known evils, but to give me leave,
 By circumstance, to accuse thy curséd self. 80

Gloucester. Fairer than tongue can name thee, let
 me have
 Some patient leisure to excuse myself.

Anne. Fouler than heart can think thee, thou
 canst make

No excuse current but to hang thyself.

Gloucester. By such despair, I should accuse myself.

Anne. And, by despairing, shalt thou stand excused
 For doing worthy vengeance on thyself
 That didst unworthy slaughter upon others.

Gloucester. Say that I slew them not?

Anne. Then say they were not slain:
 But dead they are, and, devilish slave, by thee. 90

Gloucester. I did not kill your husband.

Anne. Why, then he is alive.

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14 RICHARD THE THIRD 1. 2. 92

Gloucester. Nay, he is dead; and slain by
 Edward's hands.

Anne. In thy foul throat thou liest: Queen
 Margaret saw

Thy murd'rous falchion smoking in his blood;
 The which thou once didst bend against her breast,
 But that thy brothers beat aside the point.

Gloucester. I was provokéd by her sland'rous tongue,
 That laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders.

Anne. Thou wast provokéd by thy bloody mind,
 100 That never dream'st on aught but butcheries:
 Didst thou not kill this king?

Gloucester. I grant ye.

Anne. Dost grant me, hedgehog? then, God grant
 me too

Thou mayst be damnéd for that wicked deed!

O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous!

Gloucester. The better for the King of heaven, that
 hath him.

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

Gloucester. Let him thank me, that holp to send
 him thither;

For he was fitter for that place than earth.

Anne. And thou unfit for any place but hell.

110 *Gloucester.* Yes, one place else, if you will hear me
 name it.

Anne. Some dungeon.

Gloucester. Your bed-chamber.

Anne. Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

Gloucester. So will it, madam, till I lie with you.

Anne. I hope so.

Gloucester. I know so. But, gentle Lady Anne,
 To leave this keen encounter of our wits,
 And fall something into a slower method,