

Henry VI Part 2 abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 4

Resignation

Situation: Mild-mannered and ever-loyal-to-the-king Gloucester, the king's uncle through the Legitimate line, has a difficult time dealing at a critical moment with conflicting loyalties to his wife (whom he calls Nell) and to his king, his wife offering wise counsel that he really doesn't want to hear.

The Dutchess enters with the Sheriff.

SERVANT: So please your Grace, we'll take her from the sheriff.

GLOUCESTER: No, stir not, for your lives. Let her pass by.

DUCHESS: Come you, my lord, to see my open shame? Ah, Gloucester, hide thee from their hateful looks, and, in thy closet pent up, rue my shame and ban thine enemies, both mine and thine!

GLOUCESTER: Be patient, gentle Nell; forget this grief.

DUCHESS: Whilst I think I am thy married wife, and thou a prince, Protector of this land, methinks I should not thus be led along, mailed up in shame and followed with a rabble that rejoice to see my tears and hear my deep-fetched groans. Ah, Humphrey, can I bear this shameful yoke?

Duchess to Gloucester

**Someday I'll say I am Duke Humphrey's wife,
A prince and ruler in this great but strife
Ridden land, yet as he ruled he stood by
Whilst his forlorn wife was made a wonder
And a pointing-stick to every wry
Rascal. But Gloucester, neither blush nor stir
At nothing 'till death's ax hang over thee,
For Suffolk and she hateth thee and me,
And they with York and impious Beaufort,
That false priest, have placed decoys and traps to
Betray thy wings; so fly King Henry's court
Now before they tangle thee, or fear you
Not 'till thy foot be snared 'mongst other woes
Nor never seek protection from thy foes.**

GLOUCESTER: Ah, Nell, forbear! Thou aimest all awry. All these could not procure me any scathe, so long as I am loyal, true, and crimeless. Wouldst have me rescue thee from this reproach? Why, yet thy scandal were not wiped away but I in danger for the breach of law. Thy greatest help is quiet, gentle Nell.