

Richard III abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

History

Situation: Right at the start of this play, Shakespeare has the young Richard Plantagenet, duke of Gloucester, provide us with an introduction to the moment. Richard is a disfigured-at-birth scoundrel, ambitious beyond one's imagination, having in the last play killed an old and defenseless Henry VI in England's Tower.

Richard to himself, No. 1

This is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this king. Spent
Are the dark clouds that hung o'er our house. Our
Brows now bound with flowered wreaths; our dreadful
Marches changed to delightful dances. Sour
War hath uncreased his wrinkled face. Playful
Skips he nimbly in a lady's chamber,
But I, cheated by dissembled nature,
Pass away the time. Since I cannot prove
A lover, I'm determined to let fate
Prove I'm a villain. Plots I've laid will move
Brother George and the king to deadly hate,
The one against the other. And I the
Murderer of King Edward's heirs shall be.

RICHARD: Dive thoughts down to my soul.

Clarence enters, guarded by Brakenbury, the Lieutenant of the Tower of London.

RICHARD: Brother, good day. What means this armed guard that waits upon your Grace?

CLARENCE: His Majesty, tend'ring my person's safety, hath appointed this escort to convey me to the Tower.

RICHARD: But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

CLARENCE: Yea, Richard, when I know, for I protest as yet I do not.