

Richard III abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 3

Pleading

Situation: Queen Elizabeth, Edward IV's wife, known as the Lady Grey, shares with her brothers how worried she is over her husband's health. She legitimately worries about what will become of her and her son in the event of her husband's death. The beguiling and wily Richard duke of Gloucester enters, immediately putting everyone on the defensive.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: God grant him health. Did you confer with him?

BUCKINGHAM: Ay, madam. He desires to make atonement between the Duke of Gloucester and your brothers.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Would all were well --- but that will never be. I fear our happiness is at the height.

Richard and Hastings enter.

RICHARD: They do me wrong, and I will not endure it!

Richard to Elizabeth and her relatives

**Who is it that complains to the king, my
Brother, that I'm stern and love him not? I
Must be held the enemy, unable
To flatter men or look deceitfully
Or offer a fraudulent smile or cull
Friends as the French with apish courtesy.
Those who will fill his ears with dissentious
Rumors love him not. Cannot a righteous
Man live and think no harm, lest his simple
Truth be abused by sly, flattering Jacks?
When have I injured thee or done thee ill?
Yet you must trouble him with these attacks.
A plague on you all. The world so doth lurch
That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.**

GREY: To who in all this presence speaks your Grace?

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Come, come, we know your meaning, brother Gloucester. You envy my advancement, and my friends'. God grant we never may have need of you.

RICHARD: Our brother is imprisoned by your means, myself disgraced, and the nobility held in contempt, while great promotions are daily given to ennoble those that scarce some two days since were worth a noble.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: I never did incense his Majesty against the Duke of Clarence. My lord, you do me shameful injury falsely to draw me in these vile suspects.