

RICHARD II: THOMAS OF WOODSTOCK

ACT V, SCENE 6

Sound a retreat, then a flourish.

Enter with victory Lancaster, Cheney, Arundel, Surrey, and soldiers with Lapoole, Bushy, and Scroope [as] prisoners.

Drum and colors.

LANCASTER Thus princely Edward's sons in tender care
Of wanton Richard and their father's realm
Have toil'd to purge fair England's pleasant field
Of all those rancorous weeds that choked the grounds
And left her pleasant meads like barren hills.
Who is't can tell us which way Bagot fled?

ARUNDEL Some say to Bristol to make strong the castle.

LANCASTER See that the ports be laid. He'll fly the land
For England hath no hold can keep him from us.
Had we Tresilian hang'd, then all were sure.

CHENEY Where slept our scouts that he escaped the field?

[**ARUNDEL**] He fled, they say, before the fight begun.

LANCASTER Our proclamations soon shall find him forth,
The root and ground of all these vile abuses.

Enter Nimble with Tresilian, bound and guarded.

How now, <what guard is that?> What traitor's there?

NIMBLE The traitor now is ta'en: I here present the villain
And if he needs will know his name,
God bless my lord Tresilian.

CHENEY Tresilian, my lord,
Attach'd and apprehended by this man.

NIMBLE Yes, and it please ye, my lord, 'twas I that took him.
I was once a trampler in the law after him and I thank him. He
taught me this trick, to save myself from hanging.

LANCASTER Thou'rt a good lawyer, and hast removed the cause
from thyself fairly.

NIMBLE I have removed it with a *habeas corpus*; and then I
took him with *surssaris*, and bound him in this bond to answer it.
Nay, I have studied for my learning. I can tell ye, my lord, there was
not a stone between Westminster Hall and Temple Bar but I have
told them every morning.

ARUNDEL What moved thee, being his man, to apprehend
him?

NIMBLE Partly for the causes: First, the fear of the
proclamation, for I have plodded in Plowden and can find no law [to
say a servant must serve faithful still a master's treachery. And so to
block the law would be to block myself beneath the axe (slit my
throat as surely as a razor out of Occam), but to block my master's
blot is sure to save myself. Second, for the pay of the proclamation,
for such marks as it has marked would go far to make servant into
master, and so free myself twice over. Nay, three times over – once
from the lash of treachery; once from the strap of servitude; and once
from the whip of justice. Third, as I am a right and honest
Englishman, loyal unto your ducal crowns; for I know no treason in
myself (nay not so much as a whistle of it) and so I hope you'll spare
my crown and then pay me the golden crowns.

ARUNDEL Sir, you have spoken with a true rare wit.

LANCASTER Indeed, I have heard no man's wit like this
In all my days. Come, sir, hold your prisoner close

And your just rewards shall be paid by us.
But before you part, let me speak unto your
Captive prisoner. Now, traitorous Tresilian,
What excuse can you make for the tricks you've play'd?
We know you have spread late slanders 'gainst us;
Turned the king's ear with false law and meek praise;
And have roused all the land with taxations
Foul and vile. How answer you these charges?

TRESILIAN I shall make no answer to you, my lord,
For I have done no ill in doing my duty.

LANCASTER 'Sfoot, you hold duty in a light regard,
For in your broken duty you have broken
Your oaths to God, to King, to Law, to All.
For it your lying lawyer's tongue will be
Forever still'd. Bear hence this Lord Chief Justice
And hang his tricks from the scaffold of true law.

Exit Nimble and Tresilian.

ARUNDEL My lord, your brother York in arms resplendent
Comes bearing the captive king.

LANCASTER Call him no king.
He hath named himself an emperor divine,
But lived a landlord. Let him make answer
In a landlord's court. We'll see him tether'd
To these disloyal tenants who have bankrupted
His name, his kingdom, and his title all.

Enter York and soldiers, with King Richard as prisoner.

YORK Brother Lancaster, I bring ye fair news
That field and day are ours in perfect victory
And bring as prisoner our nephew king
In bond, but not yet broken in his pride.

LANCASTER The pride of a lion itself would break
Before such griefs as have been suffered
In his name by the commons and his lords.

ARUNDEL How shall such griefs be answered, my dear lord?

LANCASTER As such: To the profit and grace of this fair realm
We shall pluck from him and his court such traitors
As have in continuity harried
By remains his good name and rightful wits.
In docket, therefore, place Sir William Bagot,
Sir Henry Greene, and false Sir Stephen Scroop;
Add to their names that of Tresilian,
That false justice, and Bushy, coward fled.
These, and all other lords of his poor council,
We have determined should be drawn and hang'd;
Their lives made forfeit for the rents they owe.

RICHARD Here have I seen wonders truly wrought:
Dukes raised up like kings; kings subjected before dukes.
Those you have condemn'd without word of their defense
Are those most loyal, true, and just to king and crown.
They have done naught but what has been commanded,
And should they then be sentenced unto death?
I see clear now the true bent of your thoughts,
And it goes sore against my mind to see
That they have bent you 'gainst your honors true.

LANCASTER Are you yet haughty in your desolation?
Know that we stand here to find another king
Than the false 'postor who has ruled in stead.
And if such cannot be found and acclaimed
That would and ought to obey the faithful
Counsel of his lords, then surely there is
No king upon this plain to rule his subjects loyal.

RICHARD Think you, sir, I am a merchant or a fool
To sell my land to ruin and naught for all?
All that has been done has been done in my true name.
My royal throne I have ne'er abdicated,
Not even to those my friends most loyal.
Do you think the kingdom's locks I'll ever turn
For those most false and forsworn to my word?

YORK Let not this heat of passion make a forge
Or crucible to turn false true, or true to false.
I beg of you, my lord, to look about ye
For the preservation of the realm and see;
And in the seeing marvel to behold:
Look at this goodly army which has marched
In such strength to rally 'round your sides,
And yet 'tis not one-tenth part of all those
Willing subjects that have risen to destroy
Those true false traitors that with wicked counsel
Subverted the law unto base enterprises,
Turned the commons into a thieving purse,
And debased the right royal blood of Edward,
The grandsire from whom your own stock has sprung.
In wronging us, they have made you wrong yourself.

RICHARD Do you think to fear me with your bold presumption?
I stand safe encircled by that divinity
Which hedges 'bout the souls of all true kings.
But for those who have suffered in my stead,
Who would be piked for standing in my picked shoes,
I can feel true dread by proximation.
Let but the too-swift hand of your quick justice
Wait until the soon coming parliament,
That true defenses in patience may be heard,
And I shall enrich you for these your pains:
We issue good pardons to all rebelled;
Return those blank charters gathered by our debtors;
And give forth further honors and rewards

Like to a Roman Caesar gifting laurels
To a faithful general 'pon the Rubicon.
Further we will go, proud Lancaster,
By granting you such holy palatine
That you will be made like unto a king
Within our kingdom; and for your heir and son,
The noble Bolingbroke, now Earl of Darby,
We make of him anew the Duke of Herford,
And with him spruce so many duketti
Among those lesser nobles loyal to you,
As shall be thought to gloss and reassure
Those prides which have been injured by things past.

LANCASTER Nay, Richard, we will not be bought and sold
Like tenants farming from your proffered palm.
We hold within our grip fresh treasons which shall
Make your former crimes pale to dim memories.
Here is an order writ by your own hand,
Taken from messenger galloped towards France,
To plead a trait'rous license of safe conduct
From a French king held this country's enemy.
And for the payment of your pass, you pledge
Into their taking the town of Calais
And all our proud fortresses of France.
Yet worse, you would homage do a foreign king
For fair Aquitaine which was your right of birth;
You would engore upon the horns of your white hart
Your country, your lords, your subjects, and your crown,
Along with all those crowns which came before
Your own to win those rights you would depose.
You would unseat yourself and so cut off
All those unborn kings who've yet to claim their rights.
What awful treason's writ by one who would
Turn kings of France into mere liegemen of the Frank?

RICHARD I have heard slanders enough to fill my cup for life.
Be wary, uncles. Forget not that you stand

Before a king. Subjected I may be,
But never will I live to be a subject.
I look upon you and I see your angers,
And in the griefs and losses I have born,
I see and sympathize their rightful cause.
But your rages so boil forth that all England
Shall they burn before them without limit.
So I rise high before you, resplendent
In that awful power given me by God,
To stand between you and your purposed doom
Of monarchy's true grace and holy seat.
You speak of treason, and yet you dare to
Seek the debasing of a true-born king.
As surely as a violation
Of the holy right of sanctuary,
This would double divine treason wrought.
The sin of it would England ever bear
From son to son, from heir to bloody heir,
Until some awful sacrifice should purge it
From our stained soil.

LANCASTER You invoke the power
Of a king, but a king you are no more!
In this convocation of battle, we strip you
Of crown and right alike, so that it might
Unto some other worthy heir of conq'ring
Edward be depended!

YORK Hold, noble Arundel;
Let not the crown be hollowed of a right king's brow.
Brother Lancaster, the king points to thee
And names thee rage's wrathful harbinger.
Would ye prove him true? Step back from forth the brink.
Let us not wrong our brother Woodstock's memory
By turning all against those holy rights
He held in holy heart and holy mind.
Let's make of him a martyr true and dear,

And from his blood work rite to restore England's fame.
We wished a king who wished for country's good,
And here upon this plain have we found such a king
In Richard's words and acts, his laws and gifts.
Sunder'd from those tongues that guided ill,
He is our king again. And though he learns
That not all dice are loaded to his favor,
Yet still the grace of God lies upon his brow,
Wreathing it with blessing no less than crown.

LANCASTER Your words speak wisdom true and just, I think.
Let none doubt this strife was fought for justice,
Not for gain. Richard's now is crown and realm;
And Richard alone must answer for its good.

RICHARD For this we thank ye kindly, gentle uncles,
And to further quell your doubts, I offer this:
Lest any doubt Edward's blood runs through my vein,
I now pledge to put my body into pain,
To deliver town and stronghold on campaign.
To Ireland shall we muster county's force,
So that in victory we can right fair England's course.

YORK It is well said and well bethought. Come now,
We shall in triumph march through London's street.

RICHARD Go forth and make such preparations now
As shall make celebration most fit and meet.

*Exeunt.
Manet Richard.*

Richard survives, but all alone doth Richard live.
My tears for Anne a Beame I quenched in flame,
And those for fairest Greene are lost in shame,
But no tears come at all for this fresh loss
Of Bagot, Bushy, and our dear friend Scroop.

Is it loss at all if yet they live? Yea,
And a loss more dearly felt at coldest length.
In the arms of friends comfort should we find,
Not keep at bay those closest to our kind.
Yet friends are worthy to be 'voided at the court,
For what is't but poison to be courted Richard's friend?
Never more shall that close comradeship we know
Which makes it worthy to bear the burden life,
For all those mortal props of royalty
Have bent to bursting beneath my rampant heart.
I will unto the gilded halls of Westminster,
And richly there commission fresh delights
To match the bitter moods which graven thoughts.
There from a mirror's image will I carve
A tomb and effigy unto myself,
To leave the world in 'ternal monument
The testament of poor King Richard's strife:
Now am I stripped of cares, and care strips me,
And in the barren remnant left behind
My heart's become as hollow as my mind.

Exit.]

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