

● 44 CALIBRE SHAKESPEARE

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RICHARD III : ACT I·IV 'CLARENCE'S DREAM'

Clarence's evil brother Richard of Gloucester has told their eldest brother (the King) that he had a dream in which Clarence murdered his descendants. The King is poorly and sick and Richard is clever and strong, and so it is that Clarence has been imprisoned without being told why. Shortly before his vile murder, he awakes in his prison, the Tower of London, after a frightful nightmare. Only the jail warden Brakenbury is there to hear him tell the story of his vision...

CLARENCE

Methoughts that I had broken from the Tower,
And was embark'd to cross to Burgundy;
And, in my company, my brother Gloucester;
Who from my cabin tempted me to walk
Upon the hatches: thence we looked toward England,
And cited up a thousand fearful times,
During the wars of York and Lancaster
That had befall'n us. As we paced along
Upon the giddy footing of the hatches,
Methought that Gloucester stumbled; and, in falling,
Struck me, that thought to stay him, overboard,
Into the tumbling billows of the main.
Lord, Lord! methought, what pain it was to drown!
What dreadful noise of waters in mine ears!
What ugly sights of death within mine eyes!
Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
Ten thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea:
Some lay in dead men's skulls; and, in those holes
Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept,
As 'twere in scorn of eyes, reflecting gems,
Which woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.

BRAKENBURY

Had you such leisure in the time of death
To gaze upon the secrets of the deep?

CLARENCE

Methought I had; and often did I strive
To yield the ghost: but still the envious flood
Kept in my soul, and would not let it forth
To seek the empty, vast and wandering air;
But smother'd it within my panting bulk,
Which almost burst to belch it in the sea.

BRAKENBURY

Awaked you not with this sore agony?

CLARENCE

O, no, my dream was lengthen'd after life;
 O, then began the tempest to my soul,
 Who pass'd, methought, the melancholy flood,
 With that grim ferryman which poets write of,
 Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
 The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
 Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick;
 Who cried aloud, 'What scourge for perjury
 Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?'
 And so he vanish'd: then came wandering by
 A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
 Dabbled in blood; and he squeak'd out aloud,
 'Clarence is come; false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
 That stabb'd me in the field by Tewksbury;
 Seize on him, Furies, take him to your torments!
 With that, methoughts, a legion of foul fiends
 Environ'd me about, and howled in mine ears
 Such hideous cries, that with the very noise
 I trembling waked, and for a season after
 Could not believe but that I was in hell,
 Such terrible impression made the dream.

BRAKENBURY

No marvel, my lord, though it affrighted you;
 I promise, I am afraid to hear you tell it.

CLARENCE

O Brakenbury, I have done those things,
 Which now bear evidence against my soul,
 For Edward's sake; and see how he requites me!
 O God! if my deep prayers cannot appease thee,
 But thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds,
 Yet execute thy wrath in me alone,
 O, spare my guiltless wife and my poor children!
 I pray thee, gentle keeper, stay by me;
 My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep.

BRAKENBURY

I will, my lord: God give your grace good rest!

CLARENCE sleeps

Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
 Makes the night morning, and the noon-tide night.
 Princes have but their tides for their glories,
 An outward honour for an inward toil;
 And, for unfelt imagination,
 They often feel a world of restless cares:
 So that, betwixt their tides and low names,
 There's nothing differs but the outward fame.

Enter the two Murderers...