

King Henry VI, Part 3

by William Shakespeare

Presented by Paul W. Collins

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Chapter One Crown and Throne

Londoners near the palace of Westminster hear unfamiliar sounds this morning: the strident alarums of military trumpets. Armed men quickly take over the Parliament hall, as the Duke of York and noblemen commanding his rebellious forces enter the old building, elated that their troops have streamed into the capital almost unchallenged.

Positioning some of his soldiers at the doors, the Earl of Warwick, still irked by one aspect of their recent victory in the field, tells the other lords: “I wonder how the king escaped our hands!” It is as much question as exclamation; the small contingent protecting King Henry VI, who was nearly surrounded, finally rode away after the course of fighting at Saint Albans had turned against the royal army.

Says York, “While we pursued the horsemen on the north, he slyly stole away and left his men!” To annoyance is added contempt: “Whereat the great lord of Northumberland, whose warlike ears could never brook ‘retreat,’ cheered on the drooping army—and himself, Lord Clifford and Lord Stafford, all abreast, charged our main battalion’s front!” He scowls, thinking of the desperate attempt. “And, breaking in, were by the swords of *common soldiers* slain!”

York’s son Edward steps forward proudly. “Lord Stafford’s *father*, the Duke of Buckingham, is either slain or wounded dangerously: I cleft his helmet with a downright blow!” He slides his sword halfway from its scabbard. “That this is true, Father—behold his blood!”

The Marquis of Montague, Warwick’s brother, shows the king his blade. “And here’s the Earl of Wiltshire’s blood, whom I encountered as the armies joined!”

York’s younger son Richard steps forward. He pulls a severed head from a sack, lifts the horrid trophy to eye level, and addresses it: “Speak thou *for* me, and tell them what *I* did!”

The Duke of York—who despised the dead man—is delighted. “Richard hath *best* deserved of all my sons!” He seizes the gore-crust head by the damp hair, and asks it, with mock concern, “But is Your Grace *dead*, my lord of Somerset?”

The Duke of Norfolk laughs. “Such hope have *all* the line of John of Gaunt!”—relatives of the king.

Richard watches his father fling the grisly remnant into a corner. “*Thus* do I hope to shake *King Henry’s* head!”

“And so do I!” says Warwick. “Victorious *prince* of York, until I see thee seated in that throne which now the House of Lancaster *usurps*, I vow by heaven these eyes shall never close!”

He points toward the dais and the tall, carved chair at the front of the room. “This is the place of the fearful king, and *this* the regal seat! *Possess* it, York!—for this is *thine*, and not King *Henry’s* heirs’!”

“*Assist* me, then, sweet Warwick, and I will,” says York, “for hither we have broken in by *force*,” he notes, looking around in the storied hall.

Another nobleman supporting the pretender to the throne urges a determined stand here. “We’ll *all* assist you!—he that flies shall die!”

“Thanks, gentle Norfolk,” says York. “Stay by me, my lords!” He turns to his captains. “And, *soldiers*, stay and lodge by me this night.” He moves toward the oaken chair assumed by the monarch during sessions of his government’s Houses of Lords and Commons.

“And when the king comes,” Warwick advises the officers, “offer no violence, unless he seek to thrust you out *perforce*.”

“The *queen* this day here holds her Parliament,” says York, seating himself, “but little thinks *we* shall be her Council!” A session has indeed been called—by the pious king, who is widely seen as unduly passive, and ruled by Queen Margaret. “By words or blows, here let us win our right!”

Young Richard is eager. “Armed as we are, let’s *stay* within this house!”

“The ‘*Bloody*’ Parliament shall *this* be called,” cries Warwick, “unless the *Plantagenet Duke of York* be *king!*—and bashful Henry, whose cowardice hath made us”—Englishmen—“*by-words* to our enemies, *deposed!*”

“Then leave me not, my lords!—*be resolute!*” York tells them. “I mean to take *possession* of *my right!*”

Warwick is a warrior; the hereditary claim matters to him less than the exercise of power. “Neither the king nor he that loves him best, the *proudest* he that holds up Lancaster, dare stir a wing, if *Warwick* shake his bells!”—is in action, like a lively morris dancer. “I’ll *plant* Plantagenet!—and *root up* him who dares oppose! *Resolve thee*, York—*claim* the English crown!”

Suddenly the wide doors swing open, and the duke’s soldiers back away; a flourish of trumpets heralds the arrival of King Henry VI. His royal guards—wielding tall halberds—precede him into the hall, peering about warily. Several of the noblemen loyal to the king accompany him.

Pausing at the entrance, Henry points ahead. “My lords, look where the surly rebel sits, even in the *chair of state!*”

“Belike he means, backed by the power of *Warwick*, that *false* peer, to aspire unto the *crown*, and reign as *king!*” he tells his party. “Earl of Northumberland, he slew thy *father!* And *thine*, Lord Clifford—and you both have vowed *revenge* on him, his sons, his favourites, and his friends!”

“If I be *not*,” says Lord Northumberland, “heavens be revenged on *me!*”

The fiery young baron at his side also craves vengeance. “The hope thereof makes *Clifford* mourn with *steel!*”

“What, shall we *suffer* this?” demands another nobleman, a hand already at the hilt of his sword. “Let’s *pluck him down!* My heart for anger *burns!*—I cannot brook it!” The watchful men of both factions grip their weapons more tightly, bracing for an assault.

But King Henry raises a hand calmly. “Be patient, gentle Earl of Westmorland.”

“Patience is for *poltrons* such as *he!*” says Clifford angrily, gesturing toward York. “He durst not sit there had your *father* lived! My gracious lord, here in the Parliament let us *assail* the family of York!”

Northumberland seconds: “*Well* hast thou spoken, cousin! Be it *so!*”

But Henry shakes his head. “*Ah*, know you not that the *city* favours them?—and they have *troops of soldiers* at their beck!”

“But when the *duke* is *slain*, they’ll quickly fly!” counters Lord Exeter.

“Far be the thought of *this* from Henry’s heart!—to make a *shambles!*”—a slaughterhouse—“of the *Parliament*-house! Cousin of Exeter, *frowns*, *words* and *threats* shall be the war that *Henry* means to use.” A peace-loving Christian, he believes that God will protect his anointed deputy on earth.

The king strides forward and confronts his adversary. “Thou *factious* Duke of York, *descend* my throne, and kneel for grace and mercy at my feet! I am thy *sovereign!*”

“I am *thine!*” is the reply.

“For *shame*, come down!” cries Exeter, further angered by the insolence toward Henry. “He *made* thee *Duke* of York!”

“’Twas my *inheritance!*—as the earldom was.”

Exeter scoffs. “Thy father was a *traitor* to the crown!”

“Exeter, *thou* art a traitor to the crown,” cries Warwick, “in following this *usurping Henry!*”

“Whom should he follow but his *natural king?*” demands Clifford heatedly.

“*True*, Clifford!—and that’s *Richard*, Duke of *York!*” replies Warwick.

King Henry feels pity for one who would claim a title bestowed only by the Lord. “And shall *I* stand, and thou sit in my throne?” he asks patiently.

“It must and shall be so!” says York. “Content thyself.”

“Be *Duke* of Lancaster,” Warwick urges Henry. “Let *him* be king!”

“He is *both*: king *and* Duke of Lancaster!—and that the Lord of *Westmorland* shall *maintain!*” says that powerful peer, stepping forward.

“And *Warwick* shall *disprove* it! You forget that *we* are those which *chased you from the field*, and *slew your fathers!*—and with colours spread marched through the city to the palace gates!”

Northumberland glowers. “Yes, *Warwick*; I *remember* it, to my grief!—and, by his soul, *thou and thy house* shall *rue* it!”

Westmorland, his jaws clenched, stares ominously at *York*. “*Plantagenet*, from thee and these thy sons, thy kinsman and thy friends, I’ll have more *lives* than drops of blood were in my father’s veins!”

“Urge it no more!” cries *Clifford*, grasping the haft of his dagger, “lest that, instead of *words*, I send thee, *Warwick*, such a messenger as shall revenge his death before I stir!”

Warwick only laughs. “Poor *Clifford!* How I scorn *his* worthless threats!”

The Duke of *York* raises a hand for silence, and faces *Henry*. “Will you that we *show our title* to the crown?” he asks. “If not, our *swords* shall plead it *in the field!*”

“What title hast *thou, traitor*, to the crown?” demands King *Henry*. “Thy father was, as thou art, Duke of *York!*—thy grandfather, *Roger Mortimer*, Earl of *March*. I am the son of *Henry the Fifth!*—who made the Dauphin and the French to stoop, and seized upon their towns and provinces!”

Shouts *Warwick*, furious, “Talk not of *France*, sith *thou* hast *lost it all!*” Partly to obtain peace in rebellious *France*, King *Henry* ceded two provinces—lands won and held at great military cost—just south of *Normandy*, which, with *Brittany*, is still controlled by *England*.

“The *lord protector* lost it, and not I!” argues *Henry*. “When I was crowned I was but *nine months old!*” After his father’s death, the late Duke of *Gloucester* had been appointed to serve as Lord Protector of the Realm, and he had long acted in the king’s name.

“You are old enough *now*,” sneers young *Richard*, “and *yet*, methinks, you *lose!*” He turns to *York*. “Father, *tear* the *crown* from the usurper’s head!”

“Sweet father, *do so!*” says *Richard*’s older brother *Edward*. “Set it on *your* head!”

Lord Montague urges *Warwick*, “Good brother, as thou lovest and honourest *arms*, let’s *fight* it out, and not stand *cavilling* thus!”

“Sound drums and trumpets,” *Richard* tells his father, “and the king will *fly!*”

“Sons, *peace!*” demands *York*.

“Peace, *thou*,” cries the sovereign, “and give *King Henry* leave to speak!”

Insists *Warwick*, “*Plantagenet* shall speak first! *Hear* him, lords!—and be you silent, and attentive too, for he that interrupts him shall not live!”

But now the monarch is angrily indignant: “Think’st thou that I will *leave* my kingly throne, wherein my *grandsire* and my *father* sat? *No!* First shall *war unpeople* this my realm!—*aye*, and their *colours*, often borne in *France*, and now in *England*, to our heart’s great sorrow, shall be my *winding-sheet!*”

“Why *forsake* you, lords?” he asks *York*’s followers. “My title’s *good*—and better *far* than *his!*”

Warwick challenges: “*Prove* it, *Henry*, and thou shalt be king.”

“*Henry the Fourth* by *conquest* got the crown!”

“’Twas by *rebellion* against *his king!*” says *York* sharply.

Henry is well aware that his grandfather, by insurrection, deposed King *Richard II*—who was later murdered while in custody. *I know not what to say; my title’s weak*, he admits to himself.

“Tell me: may not a king *adopt* an *heir?*”

York shrugs. “What, then?”

“An if he *may*, then am I lawful king: for *Richard the Second*, within the view of many lords, *resigned* the crown to *Henry the Fourth*, whose heir *my father* was—and I am *his!*”

York scowls. “He *rose against him* who was his sovereign!—and *made* him to resign his

crown *perforce!*”

Warwick, nodding, would argue the point further: “Suppose, my lords, he did it *unconstrained*—think you ’twere prejudicial to *his* crown?”—harmed York’s claim.

“No,” admits silver-haired Exeter, “for Richard the Second could not so resign his crown but that *the next heir* should succeed and reign.”

King Henry is taken aback. “Art thou *against* us, Duke of Exeter?”

“His is the *right*, and therefore pardon me.”

York watches, amused, as the king speaks in hushed tones with Exeter. “Why whisper you, my lords, and answer not?”

Says Exeter quietly, “My conscience tells me *he* is lawful king.”

As York watches, King Henry pales. *All will revolt from me, and turn to him!*

Lord Northumberland warns York: “Plantagenet, for all the claim thou lay’st, think not that *Henry* shall be so deposed!”

Warwick is adamant. “Deposed he *shall* be, in despite of all!”

“Thou art deceived!” says Northumberland contemptuously. “’Tis not the *southern* power of Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk which makes *thee* thus *presumptuous* and *prideful!*—nor can *Kent* set the duke up in despite of *me!*” A rebellion of commoners, instigated there at York’s behest, has just failed, after marching into London.

“King Henry, be thy title right or wrong, Lord *Clifford* vows *to fight in thy defence!*” says that young nobleman boldly. “May that ground gape and swallow me alive where I shall kneel to him that *slew my father!*”

Thinks the king, *Oh, Clifford, how thy words revive my heart!*

York leans forward. “Henry of Lancaster, *resign* thy crown!” he demands. He sees the king’s courtiers conferring again. “What mutter you, or in what conspire you, lords?”

“Do *right* unto this princely Duke of York,” Warwick warns them, “or I will fill the house with armed men, and over the chair of state where now he sits *write up* his title with *usurping blood!*” At a loud stamp of his armored foot, more of his soldiers show themselves—and their steel weapons—by entering at the back and side doors.

King Henry, a devout and peaceable man, has already been considering a compromise. “My lord of Warwick, hear me but one word.” He faces York. “Let me for this my *lifetime* reign as king.”

And now York, too, surprises them all: “Confirm the crown to *me* and to mine *heirs*, and thou shalt reign in quiet while thou livest.”

King Henry VI nods his acceptance. “I am content. Richard Plantagenet, enjoy the kingdom after my decease.”

Their sudden agreement appalls the noblemen with the Lancastrian king.

“What a *wrong* is this unto the *prince*, your *son!*” cries Clifford, astonished.

“What a *good* is this!” retorts Warwick, “for *England* and *himself!*”

Westmorland, too, glares at his king. “*Base, fearful* and despairing Henry!”

“How thou hast injured both *thyself* and *us!*” says Clifford.

Westmorland turns to leave. “I cannot stay to *hear* these articles!”

Northumberland joins him. “Nor I!”

“Come, Cousin, let us tell the *queen* these news!” says Clifford, following at Northumberland’s side.

Westmorland looks back to sneer at Henry. “Farewell, faint-hearted and degenerated king, in whose cold blood no spark of *honour* bides!”

“Be thou a *prey* unto the House of York,” mutters Northumberland in disgust, “and *die* in *bands* for this unmanly deed!”

Clifford is livid. “In dreadful *war* mayst thou be *overcome!*—or in peace live *abandoned* and *despised!*”

Henry watches, dejected, as the three noblemen stride from the hall, followed by their

soldiers.

“Turn *this* way, Henry, and regard them not,” says Warwick.

“They seek *revenge*,” says wise Lord Exeter, “and therefore will not *yield*.”

King Henry nods, and regards the old man sadly. “*Ah*, Exeter....”

Warwick is irritated; he had wanted to *seize* the crown—*now*. “Why should *you* sigh, my lord?” he asks Henry.

“Not for myself, Lord Warwick, but for my *son*, whom I, unnaturally, shall *disinherit*.” He comes to stand before York. “But be it as it may,” says Henry, “I here entail the crown to thee and to thine heirs forever—conditionally that here thou take an oath to *cease this civil war*, and whilst I live to honour me as thy king and sovereign, and neither by treason nor hostility seek to put me down and reign thyself.”

York stands and bows. “This oath I willingly take, and will perform.”

“Long live *King Henry!*” cries Warwick. “Plantagenet, embrace him!”

Henry smiles faintly as York’s arm clasps his shoulders. “And long live thou, and these thy forward sons.”

“Now York and Lancaster are reconcilèd!” proclaims the duke.

Lord Exeter has endured a lifetime of warring, abroad, and more recently at home. “Accursèd be he that seeks to make them foes!”

At Warwick’s signal, his herald’s cornet sounds a sennet for the king, and the duke steps away from the throne. “Farewell, my gracious lord,” says York. “I’ll to my castle.”

Says Warwick sternly, “And I’ll keep to London, with my *soldiers*.”

“And I to Norfolk with my followers,” says the eastern lands’ duke, bowing to York.

Montague likewise bows. “And I unto the seat from whence I came.”

York leads the procession of his sons and supporters as they leave the Parliament hall.

King Henry VI motions for his remaining lords and attendants, nonplussed and perplexed, to follow him back to the palace. *And I, with grief and sorrow, to the court.*

Queen Margaret, he knows, will be waiting.

Chapter Two Heights of Glory

Here comes the queen, whose looks bewray her anger!” says the tall nobleman, standing with the king in the throne room. “I’ll steal away....”

“Exeter, so will *I*,” says Henry, and they head toward a side door.

But Margaret calls, warning him: “*Nay*, go not from me!—I will *follow* thee!”

“Be patient, gentle queen, and I will stay,” sighs the sovereign. He turns back, resigned to hearing her rage yet again.

“Who can be *patient* in such *extremes*? *Oh*, wretched man! Would I had *died a maid* and never *seen* thee!—never *borne thee son*, seeing thou hast proved so *unnatural a father!*” Their boy, Edward, sixteen, is with her.

“Hath he deserved to *lose his birthright* thus? Hadst thou but loved him *half* so well as *I*—or felt that pain which *I* did for him once, or nourished him as *I* did with my blood—thou wouldst have left thy dearest *heart-blood* there rather than have that savage *duke* thine heir, and disinherited *thine only son!*”

“Father, you *cannot* disinherit me!” protests the prince. “If *you* be *king*, why should not I succeed?”—follow in that title.

Henry raises his hands, appealing to reason. “Pardon me, Margaret; pardon me, sweet son! The Earl of Warwick and the duke *enforcèd* me....”

“Enforced *thee!*—art thou *king*, and wilt be *forcèd?*” demands the queen. “I *shame* to hear thee *speak!*”

“*Oh, timorous wretch!* Thou hast *undone* thyself, thy *son*, and *me!*—and given unto the House of York such head as thou shalt reign but *by their sufferance!* To entail him and his heirs unto the *crown!*—what is it but to *make thy sepulchre*, and *creep into it* far before thy time!”

Recent law entrenching York in the government appall her. “Warwick is *chancellor*, and the lord of *Calais*; stern Falconbridge commands the narrow seas; the duke”—York himself—“is made *Protector* of the *Realm!*—and yet shalt *thou* be *safe?* Such safety finds the trembling *lamb* environed with *wolves!*”

“Had *I*, who am a helpless *woman*, been there, the soldiers should have *tossed me on their pikes* before *I* would have so granted that Act! But thou preferrest thy *life* before thine *honour!*”

“And seeing thou dost, *I* here *divorce* myself both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed, until that Act of Parliament whereby my son is disinherited be *repealed!*”

“The northern lords that have forsworn *thy* colours will follow *mine*, if once they see them spread—and spread they *shall* be, to *thy* foul disgrace, and utter ruin of the House of *York!*”

“Thus do *I* leave thee,” she says disdainfully. “Come, son, let’s away; our army is ready! *Come*, we’ll after them!”

“Stay, gentle Margaret, and hear me speak,” pleads Henry.

“Thou hast spoke too much already! Get thee gone!”

“Gentle son Edward, *thou* wilt stay with me....”

Margaret laughs bitterly. “Aye—to be *murdered* by his *enemies!*”

Young Edward’s contempt for his father shows in his face. “When *I* return with *victory*, *from the field*, I’ll see Your Grace. Till then I’ll follow *her.*”

“Come, son, *away!*” says Queen Margaret, already at the doors, “*we* may not linger thus!”

Henry, crushed, watches them go. “Poor queen! How love for me and for her son hath made her break out into terms of rage!”

Exeter look down—sadly; only Henry believes that the queen loves him.

The forlorn king ponders. “Revenge *she* may be on that hateful duke, whose haughty spirit, winged with desire, will cost my crown, and, like an empty eagle, feed on the flesh of me and of my son.”

Henry is already dreading the very strife he had sought to avoid. “The loss of those three lords torments my heart,” he says, of Northumberland, Westmorland and Clifford. “I’ll *write* unto them, and *entreat* them fair! Come, cousin you shall be the messenger.

“And *I* shall, *I* hope, reconcile them all!”

Lord Exeter only nods. He can convey the king’s letters to alienated allies, but not Henry’s hopefulness.

Richard is imperious: “Brother, though *I* be youngest, give me leave!”

“*No*, *I* can better play the orator!” replies Edward.

Their uncle would intercede: “But *I* have *reasons*, strong and forcible!” says Lord Montague, as the duke comes to join them in his home, Sandal Castle, near Wakefield in north-central England.

“Why, how now, sons and brother! At a strife?” asks York. “What is your quarrel? First, how began it?”

“No quarrel, but a slight contention,” says Edward.

“About what?”

Richard answers: “About that which concerns Your Grace, and us—the *crown of England*, Father, which is *yours!*”

“Mine, boy? Not till King Henry be dead.”

“Your *right* depends not on his life or death!” insists Richard.

“*Now* you are heir!—therefore *enjoy* it now!” urges Edward. “If you give the House of Lancaster leave to *breathe*, it will *outrun* you, Father, in the end!” he warns.

York shakes his head. “*I* took an oath that he should quietly reign.”

“But for a *kingdom*, any oath may be broken!” argues Edward. “I would break a *thousand* oaths to reign *one year!*”

“*No!*—God forbid Your Grace should be *forsworn*,” says Richard—but clearly he has something in mind.

“I *shall* be, if I claim by open war,” says York.

“I’ll prove the contrary, if you’ll hear me speak,” Richard tells him.

“Thou canst not, son; it is impossible.”

“An oath not took before a true and lawful magistrate who hath *authority* over him that swears is *of no moment*,” Richard argues. “Henry *had* none—did but *usurp* that place!

“And, seeing ’twas *he* that *made you* depose, your oath, my lord, is in vain and *superfluous!*” he contends. “Therefore, to *arms!*”

“And, Father, do but think how *sweet* a thing it is to *wear a crown*—within whose circuit is *Elysium*, and all that poets feign of *bliss and joy!*”

Richard can see that his father is considering. “Why do we *linger* thus? I cannot rest until the white rose that I wear be dyed in the lukewarm blood of *Henry’s heart!*”

The duke himself chose the pale flower to be the House of York’s emblem, in the days before King Henry—whose Lancastrian faction has since worn red roses—restored to him the title and lands lost by his father.

Persuaded, York lifts a hand to halt further argument. “Richard, enough! I *will* be king, or *die!*” He turns to Montague. “Brother, thou shalt to London immediately, and whet *Warwick* for this enterprise!

“Thou, Richard, shalt to the Duke of *Norfolk*, and tell him, privily, of our intent!

“You, Edward, shall unto my lord *Cobham*, with whom the Kentishmen will willingly rise! In them I trust; for they are soldiers witty, courteous, liberal—full of *spirit!*”

He paces, thinking. “While you are thus employed, what resteth more but that I seek *occasion* how to rise—but let the king not be *privy* to my drift, nor any of the House of Lancaster.

“But, stay.... *What news?*” he asks, as a servant of his own household bursts into the room and bows quickly. “Why comest thou in such haste?”

“The *queen*, with all the *northern* earls and lords, intends to *besiege you* here in your castle!” the man reports. “She is hard by, with *twenty thousand men!* And therefore *fortify your stronghold*, my lord!”

“*Aye*, with my *sword!*” cries York. “What?—think they that we *fear* them?”

“Edward and Richard, you shall stay with me; my brother Montague shall post to London! Let noble Warwick, Cobham, and the rest, whom we have left as protectors of the king, with powerful policy *strengthen themselves!*—and trust not simple Henry, nor his oaths!” he adds indignantly—despite the irony. He believes the king is breaking his vow.

Montague bows. “Brother, I go! I’ll win them; fear it not! And thus most humbly I do take my leave.” As he goes, he passes two arriving noblemen, their faces grim.

York greets them. “Sir John and Sir Hugh *Mortimer*, mine uncles, you are come to Sandal by good hap *this hour!*” he tells the brothers. “The army of the queen means to *besiege us!*”

Says Sir John confidently, “She shall not need; we’ll *meet her in the field!*”

York frowns. “What, with *five thousand men?*”

“*Aye*, with *five hundred*, Father, for a need!” cries Richard. “A *woman’s* their general!—what should we fear?”

“I hear their *drums!*” says Edward; the royal forces are already near, and advancing. “Let’s set our men in order, and issue forth and bid them battle straight!”

York considers—briefly. “Five men to twenty! Though the odds be great, I doubt not, uncles, of our victory! Many a battle have I won in France when the enemy hath been *ten* to one!

“Why should I not now have the like success?”

York’s youngest son—the Earl of Rutland is a boy of ten—having walked from the castle

into the orchard with a graybeard priest, finds himself surrounded by soldiers: the queen's, rushing toward him, and the duke's, running to grapple with them. And intense fighting breaks out nearby, as troops of both sides, shifting ground back and forth between Sandal and the town of Wakefield, struggle violently to defend or take the fortress.

The child watches, frantic. *Oh, whither shall I fly to 'scape their hands?* He points, terrified, as trumpets' shrill calls blare around them. "*Oh, tutor, look where bloody Clifford comes!*"

The cleric starts toward the Lancastrian lord, empty hands outstretched in supplication.

"Chaplain, away!" orders the embittered baron harshly. "*Thy priesthood saves thy life. As for the brat of this accursèd duke whose father slew my father, he shall die!*"

"And I, my lord, will bear him company," says the old man, as the little lad clutches his hand.

"Soldiers, away with him!" Clifford's men seize the churchman, and the boy falls as his tutor is roughly pulled away.

"*Oh, Clifford, murder not this innocent child!*" pleads the priest, as he is dragged off, "lest thou be *hated* by both *God* and *man!*"

Clifford circles the fallen Rutland, who lies on the ground, with only a slender arm shielding him. "How now! Is he dead already? Or is it *fear* that makes him close his eyes? *I'll* open them!"

The boy has glimpsed approaching menace. *So looks the enraged lion o'er the wretch that trembles under his greedy paws!* He listens. *And so he walks, exulting, o'er his prey! And so he comes, to rend his limbs asunder!* His eyes pop open: "Oh, gentle Clifford, kill me with thy sword, and not with such a cruel, threatening look!"

"Sweet Clifford, hear me *speak* before I die! I am too small a subject for thy wrath! Be thou revenged on *men*, and let me live!"

"In vain thou speak'st, poor boy," says the nobleman coldly. "*My father's blood* hath stopped the passage where thy words should enter!"

"Then let *my father's blood* open it again! He is *a man!*—then, Clifford, cope with *him!*"

"Had I thy *brethren* here, their lives *and* thine were not revenge sufficient for *me!* *No*, if I digged up thy *forefathers' graves* and hung their rotten *corpses* up in chains, it could not slake mine ire, nor ease my heart! The *sight* of any of the House of York is as a *Fury* to torment *my soul!*—and till I root out their accursèd *line* and leave *not one alive*, I live in *Hell!*

"Therefore—" he says, drawing his sword.

"Oh, let me *pray* before I take my death! To *thee* I pray—sweet Clifford, *pity* me!"

"Such pity as my *rapier's point* affords."

"I never did thee harm! Why wilt thou slay me?"

"Thy father hath—"

"But 'twas ere I was *born!* *Thou* hast one son!—for *his* sake pity me, lest in revenge thereof, sith God is just, he be as miserably slain as I! Oh, let me live in *prison* all my days—and when I give occasion of offence, *then* let me die, for now thou hast no cause!"

That enrages Clifford: "No *cause!* Thy father *slew my father!*

"Therefore, *die!*" he shouts, stabbing the cowering child.

The boy's eyes widen in pain and disbelief as the blade is withdrawn from his chest. He tries to sit, but falls back, limp, blood trickling from his mouth. He gasps, and manages to whisper a line from a recent lesson in Latin: "*Di faciant laudis summa sit ista tuae!*"—*The gods grant that this be the height of your glory.* An apple rolls from his hand.

Lord Clifford lifts his sword high, looks toward the castle, and stalks forward. "*Plantagenet!* I come, *Plantagenet!*" he shouts.

"And this *thy son's blood* cleaving to my blade shall rest upon my weapon till *thy* blood, congealèd with his, do make me wipe off *both!*"

His armor, polished in peace, still glistens, but the Duke of York is dismayed and exhausted as he pauses for breath on the corpse-strewn ground near his castle. *The army of the queen hath got the field!* he realizes.

My uncles both are slain in rescuing me—and all my followers from the eager foe turn back, and fly like ships before the wind, or lambs pursued by hungry—starvèd—wolves!

My sons! God knows what hath be-chancèd them! But this I know: they have comported themselves like men born to renown, by life or death! Three times did Richard make a lane to me, and thrice cried, 'Courage, Father! Fight it out!' And full as oft came Edward to my side with purple falchion, painted to the hilt in blood of those that had encountered him!

And when the hardiest warriors did retire, Richard cried, 'Charge!—and give no foot of ground!' And cried, 'A crown, or else a glorious tomb! A sceptre, or an earthly sepulchre!' With that we charged again!—but, alas, out we bodged again!—as I have seen a swan with bootless labour swim against the tide, and spend her strength, in waves over-matchèd!

He sees a large contingent of royal troops surging forward under a trumpet's brazen encouragement. *Ah, hark! The fatal followers do pursue! An I were strong, I would not shun their fury! But I am faint, and cannot fly their hurry!*

He spots, beyond the soldiers led by Lord Northumberland, Queen Margaret. She commands the army; and walking beside her is a boy, her son, Edward, Prince of Wales.

Thinks York, *The sands are numbered that make up my life; here must I stay, and here my life must end.*

Come, bloody Clifford, rough Northumberland, I dare your quenchless fury to more rage! I am your target, and I abide your shot!

Northumberland confronts him. "*Yield to our mercy, proud Plantagenet!*"

Scowling, Clifford strides toward York. "Aye—to such mercy as *his* ruthless arm, with downward payment, showed unto *my* father!"

"Now *Phaethon* hath tumbled from his cart, and made an evening"—sunset—"at the noontide mark!" The son of Helios, the sun god, died trying to fly his father's chariot.

York scowls at them. "*My* ashes may bring forth, as the phoenix, a bird that will *revenge* upon you all! And in that hope I throw mine eyes to heaven, scorning what'er you can afflict me with!" He lifts his blade. "Why come you not? *What? Multitudes—and fear?*"

Clifford sneers. "So *cowards* fight when they can *fly no further!* So *doves* do peck the falcon's piercing talons—so desperate *thieves*, all hopeless of their lives, breathe out invectives 'gainst the officers!"

"Oh, Clifford," laughs York contemptuously, "but bethink thee once again, and in thy thought o'er-run my *former* time!—and if though canst, despite *blushing*, view *this* face, then bite thy tongue, that slanders him with cowardice whose *frown* hath made thee faint and fly ere this!"

Clifford starts toward him. "I will not bandy with thee word for *word*, but buckle with thy *blows!*—*twice two* for *one!*"

"*Hold*, valiant Clifford!" demands Queen Margaret angrily. "For a *thousand* causes I would prolong awhile the traitor's life, till my *wrath* make him *deaf!*"

But Clifford, drawing his sword, would ignore her. "Speak *thou*, Northumberland!"

"*Hold*, Clifford!" cries the earl, grabbing the baron's arm. "Do not *honour* him so much as to *prick thy finger*, though to wound his *heart!* When a *cur* doth snarl, what *valour* were it for one to thrust his hand between the teeth, when he might spurn it away with his *foot?*"

He signals to the soldiers; they surround York; he brandishes his sword between two, but the others seize him from behind. "It is *war's* prize to take all vantages; and ten-to-one is no impeach of valour," says Northumberland.

Clifford watches as York struggles furiously, his sword fallen nearby. "Aye, *aye!*—so strives the woodcock with the snare!"

"So doth the *cony*"—rabbit—"struggle in the *net*," laughs Northumberland.

"So triumph *thieves* upon their conquered booty!" retorts York hotly, pulling forward despite his captors. "So *true men* yield, with *robbers* so o'ermatchèd!"

Northumberland turns to the queen. "What would Your Grace have done unto him now?"

Says Margaret, "Brave warriors, Clifford and Northumberland, come, make him who *raught*

at a mountain with outstretchèd arms, yet with his hands *parted but their shadows*, stand upon this *molehill* here!” She points to the ground near her feet.

As York is dragged before her, she sneers: “What? Was it *you* that would be England’s king? Was’t you that *revelled* in our Parliament, and made a preaching of your high descent? Where are your mess of sons to back you *now*?—the wanton Edward, and the lusty George! And where’s that valiant, crook-back prodigy *Dicky*, your boy that with his grumbling voice was wont to cheer his dad in *mutinies*?”

“Or, with the rest, where is your darling *Rutland*?” she asks as York glowers. “*Look, York!*—I stained this kerchief with the blood that valiant *Clifford*, with his *rapier’s point*, made issue from the bosom of the boy! And if thine eyes can water for his death, I give thee *this* to dry thy cheeks withal!”

York turns his head to avoid the square of stained silk she presses to his face; but he stares as it falls to his feet.

“*Alas, poor York,*” says the queen sourly. “But that I *hate thee deadly*, I should lament thy miserable state.

“I prithee, York, *grieve*, to make me *merry*!” she urges, as he stands stone-faced. “What, hath thy fiery heart so parched thine entrails that not a tear can fall for *Rutland’s* death? Why art thou so *patient*, man?—thou shouldst be *mad*! And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus!” She strikes his face, hard. “*Stamp, rave, and fret,*” she cries, “that I may *sing and dance!*”

Striving furiously against the soldiers’ grip, York heaves himself toward her.

“Thou wouldst be *freed*, I see, to make me sport!” laughs Margaret. She thinks for a moment. “*York* cannot speak unless he wear a *crown*. A crown for York!” she calls, “and, lords, *bow low* to him!

“Hold you his hands,” she orders the soldiers, “whilst I do set it on.”

A coronet is fashioned, crudely, of twisted paper, and she positions it on York’s head. “*Aye, marry, sir, now* looks he like a *king*!—aye, *this* is he that took King Henry’s *chair*, and this is he was his adopted *heir*!

“But how is it that great Plantagenet is crowned so *soon*?—and *broke his solemn oath*! As I bethink me, you should not be king till our King Henry had shook hands with Death. But will you surround your head with *Henry’s* glory, and rob his temples of the diadem *now*, in his life, *against your holy oath*?”

“Oh, ’tis a fault too, too unpardonable!” she cries. “*Off* with the crown!—and with the crown *his head*!—and, whilst *we* breathe, take time to do him *dead*!”

“That is *my* office, for my *father’s* sake!” insists Clifford.

“Nay, *stay,*” says Margaret, revelling in York’s anguish, “let’s hear the orisons”—prayers—“he makes!” The soldiers force the duke to his knees.

He looks down at the blood-smearèd kerchief—then up at her. “*She-wolf of France!*” he cries, “but *worse* than wolves of France—whose *tongue’s* more poisonous than the adder’s tooth! How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex to triumph like an *Amazon trull* upon their woes whom *Fortune* captivates!

“But that thy face is *vizard-like*—unchanging, made impudent with use of evil deeds—I would assay, proud queen, to make thee *blush*!

“To tell thee whence thou *camest*, of whom *derivèd*, were shame enough to shame thee, wert thou not *shameless*! Thy father bears the *style* of King of Naples, of both the Sicilia and Jerusalem—yet is not so wealthy as an *English yeoman*!

“Hath *that* poor monarch taught thee to *insult*? You need not, nor boots it thee, prideful queen—unless the adage must be *verified*, that ‘*Beggars, mounted, run their horses to death!*’

“’Tis *beauty* that doth oft make *women* proud; but God, He knows *thy* share thereof is small! ’Tis *virtue* that doth make them most admired; the *contrary* doth make *thee* wondered at! ’Tis *forbearance* that makes them seem divine; the *want* thereof makes thee *abominable*!

“Thou art as *opposite* to every good as the Antipodes are unto *us*, or as the *south* to the

septentrion!—the frigid far north. “Oh, *tiger’s* heart wrapt in a woman’s *hide!*—how couldst thou disdain the life-blood of a *child!*—bid the *father* wipe his eyes withal!—and yet be seen to bear a *woman’s* face? Women are soft, mild, pitying and flexible—*thou*, stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless!

“Bids’t me thou *to rage?* Why, now thou hast thy wish. Wouldst have me *weep?*” he asks, tears on his cheeks. “Why, now thou hast thy will.

“For raging *wind* blows up incessant showers; and when the *rage* allays, the rain begins. These tears are my sweet Rutland’s *obsequies!*—and every drop cries *vengeance* for his death, ’gainst *thee*, fell Clifford, and *thee*, false *Frenchwoman!*”

As York sobs, Lord Northumberland looks away. *Beshrew me, but his passion moves me so that I can hardly check my eyes from tears!*

York pictures his youngest son; the boy’s name was Edmund. “That face of his a *hungry cannibal* would not have touched, would not have stained with blood! But *you* are more inhuman, more inexorable, *oh, ten times* more, than *tigers* of *Hyrkania!*

“*See*, ruthless queen, a hapless father’s tears!” On his knees, he leans forward. “This cloth thou dippedst in blood of my sweet boy—and I with tears do *wash the blood away!*

“*Keep* thou the kerchief, and go *boast* of this—and if thou tell’st the heavy story aright, upon my soul the *hearers* will shed *tears!*—yea even my *foes* will shed fast-falling tears, and say, ‘*Alas*, it was a *pitiful deed!*’”

He shakes his head, and the paper symbol drops at her feet. “There, take thy crown, and with the crown *my curse!* And in *thy* need, may such comfort come to thee as now *I* reap at thy too-cruel hand!

“Hard-hearted Clifford, take me from the world!” he demands. “My *soul* to heaven!—my *blood* upon *your heads!*”

Northumberland moves away. *Had he been slaughter-man to all my kin, I should not for my life but weep with him, to see how deeply sorrow grips his soul!*

Margaret is annoyed. “What, *weeping-ripe*, my lord Northumberland? Think but upon the *wrong* he did us all, and that will quickly dry thy melting tears!”

Clifford steps forward. “Here’s for my *oath!*” he cries, stabbing the kneeling man in the side with his sword. York gasps, and shudders as the blade pulled out. The weapon strikes again: “Here’s for my father’s *death!*”

“And *here’s* to right our gentle-hearted *king!*” the queen tells York, stepping forward to plunge her slender dagger into his chest.

The dying duke’s eyes roll skyward. “Open thy gate of mercy, gracious God!” Slowly he tips forward and falls, face against the ground. *My soul flies through these wounds to seek out Thee....*

“Off with his head,” Margaret orders the soldiers, “and set it on York gates—so York may overlook the town of York!”

Chapter Three Forces Meet

One hundred miles from Sandal, on a plain near Mortimer’s Cross in Herefordshire, an army of rebellious troops is already on the march just before daybreak, led by two of the Duke of York’s sons, each on horseback. In the February chill, their visible breath drifts back as they ride.

“I wonder how our princely father escaped,” says Edward. “Or *whether* he be ’scaped or no from Clifford’s and Northumberland’s pursuit!” Since they fled, he has had only terse, guttural replies from Richard. “Had he been ta’en, we should have heard the news; had he been slain, we should have heard the news. Or had he ’scaped, methinks we should have heard the *happy* tidings of his good escape....” He notes Richard’s silence. “How fares my brother? Why is he so sad?”

“I cannot joy until I be resolvèd what has become of our right-valiant father!

“I saw him in the battle ranged about, and watched him—how he signaled *Clifford* forth! Methought he bore him in the thickest troop as doth a *lion* in a herd of cattle, or as a *bear* encompassed round with dogs—who having *pinched* a few and *made them cry*, the rest all stand back and *bark* at him!

“So fared our father with his *enemies*; so fled his enemies from my warlike *father*! Methinks ’tis prize enough *to be his son!*”

He watches as an array of clouds spreads slowly in the glowing east. “See how the morning opes her golden gates, and takes her greeting of the glorious sun. How well it resembles the prime of youth, trimmèd like a youngster prancing to his love!”

Edward squints at shafts of sunlight slating from the line of pink billows. “Are mine eyes dazzled, or do I see *three suns*?”

“Three *glorious suns!*—each one a *perfected sun*,” Richard tells his brother, “not serrated by the racking clouds, but *several*—in a pale, clear-shining sky!” He points to the gradually emerging blue horizon. “See, *see!*—they *join*, embrace and seem to kiss, as if they vowed some league inviolable!

“Now are they but *one lamp*, *one light*—*one sun!* In this the heaven prefigures some event...” He seems to be musing.

Edward watches the dawn. “’Tis wondrous *strange*, the like yet never *heard of!* I think it incites us, Brother, *to the field!*—so that we, the *sons* of brave Plantagenet, each one already emblazoned by our meeds, should notwithstanding join our lights *together*, and over-shine the *world*, as this does the earth!

“Whate’er it bodes,” he says, resolved, “henceforward will I bear upon my shield three fair-shining *suns!*”

“Nay, bear three *daughters!*” Richard wants no more heirs of York. He gibes, hastily, “By your leave I speak it: you love the *breeder* better than the male!” Edward does, indeed, enjoy women—many of them.

Richard sees a messenger riding toward them, here at the front of long columns of marching troops. “Who art thou?” he asks, reining in his horse as the man reaches them, “whose heavy looks foretell some dreadful story hanging on thy tongue!”

“One that was a woeful looker-on when the noble *Duke of York* was *slain!*—your princely father, and my loving lord!”

“*Oh!*—*speak no more*, for I have heard *too much!*” cries Edward, dismounting.

Richard frowns. “Say how he died, for I will hear it all.”

“Environèd he was with many foes, and *stood against them* as did the hope of *Troy*”—Hector—“gainst the Greeks that would have entered the city!

“But Hercules himself must yield to odds; and many strokes, though with a little ax, hew down and fell the hardest-timbered oak! By *many* hands your father was subdued—but only slaughtered by the ireful arm of unrelenting *Clifford!*—and the *queen*, who crowned the gracious duke in high *despite!*—*laughed in his face!*”

“And when with grief he wept, the ruthless queen gave him, to dry his cheeks, a cloth steepèd in the innocent blood of sweet young *Rutland*, by rough *Clifford slain!*”

“And after many scorns, many foul taunts, *they took his head!*—and on the gates of York they set the same! And there it doth remain, the saddest spectacle that e’er I viewed!”

Edward looks northward, weeping. “Sweet Duke of York, our prop to lean upon, now *thou* art gone we have no staff, no stay!

“O *Clifford*, boist’rous *Clifford!*—thou hast slain the flower known by *Europe* for his chivalry—and *treacherously* hast thou vanquished him, for hand-to-hand he would have vanquished *thee!*”

“Now my *soul’s* palace is become a *prison!* *Oh*, would it break from hence, that this my body might in the ground be closèd up in rest! For never henceforth shall I joy again!—never, *oh*

never, shall I again see joy!”

Richard dismounts. “I *cannot* weep,” he says fiercely, “for all my body’s moisture scarce serves to quench my *furnace*, burning at *heart*! Nor can my tongue reduce my heart’s great burthen, for the selfsame wind that I should *speak* withal is *kindling coals*!—it inflames all my breast, and burns me up with fire that tears would quench!

“To weep is to make *less* the depth of grief! Tears, then, for infants—*blows* and *revenge* for me! O Richard, I bear thy name—I’ll *avenge* thy death, or die renowned by *attempting it*!”

Says Edward sadly, “His *name* that valiant duke hath left with thee; his dukedom and his chair with me are left.”

Richard clasps his shoulder firmly. “And if thou *be* that princely eagle’s bird, *show* thy descent by *gazing ’gainst the sun*, for chair and dukedom—*throne* and *kingdom*! Either say *that* is thine, or else thou wert not *his*!” Arousing Edward’s anger, whether it brings him success or failure, can only serve Richard’s own aspiration.

As the new duke ponders, another battalion of Yorkist troops approaches, led by Warwick and his brother Montague.

“How now, fair lords? What fare?” asks the earl, riding up to join them. “What news abroad?”

Richard replies gravely. “Great lord of Warwick, if we should recount *our* baleful news, and at each word, deliverance stab *poniards*”—daggers—“into our flesh till all were told, the *words* would add more anguish than the wounds! Our valiant lord the *Duke of York* is *slain*!”

“O Warwick, *Warwick*!” moans Edward, “that Plantagenet who held thee as dearly as his soul’s redemption is by the stern Lord Clifford done to death!”

The grim-faced nobleman climbs down from his horse. “*Ten days ago* I drowned *those* news in tears! And now, to add more measure to your woes, I come to tell you things since then befallen.

“After the bloody fray at Wakefield fought, where your brave father breathed his latest gasp, tidings were brought me, as swiftly as the posts could run, of your loss, and his depart.

“I, then in London, keeper of the king,”—in effect, holding him in custody, “mustered my soldiers, gathered flocks of friends, and, very well equipped, as I thought, marched toward Saint Albans to *intercept the queen*!—bearing the *king* along, at my behest. For by my scouts I was advised that she was coming with the full intent of *dashing* our late decree in Parliament touching on King Henry’s oath, and your succession!

“Short tale to make, we at Saint Albans met, our battles joined,”—armies clashed, “and both sides *fiercely fought*!

“But whether ’twas the coldness of the king, who looked full *gently* on his warlike queen, that robbed my soldiers of their heated spleen, or whether ’twas report of her *success*, or more-than-common fear of *Clifford’s* rigor in thundering his *captives* to bloody death, I cannot judge—but to conclude with truth: *their* weapons like *lightning* came and went; *our* soldiers’ like the *night-owl’s* lazy flight, or like an idle thresher’s flail, fell *gently* down, as if they struck their *friends*!

“I cheered them onward with the *justice* of our cause, with promise of high *pay* and great *rewards*! But all in vain—they had no heart to fight, and we in them no hope to win the day.

“So then we fled: the *king* unto the *queen*; your brother Lord George, Norfolk, and myself in haste, *post-haste*, are come to join here with *you*! For in the marches we heard you were making another head to *fight again*!”

“Where is the Duke of Norfolk, gentle Warwick?” asks Edward. “And when came George from Burgundy to *England*?”

“Some six miles off, the duke is with the soldiers; and as for your brother, he was lately sent from your kind aunt, Duchess of Burgundy, with aid of *soldiers*, to this needful war!”

Richard regards the earl. “’Twas, odds belike, when valiant Warwick *fled*; oft have I heard his *praises* in *pursuit*, but ne’er till now his scandal of retreat.”

“*Nor now* my *scandal*, Richard, dost thou hear!” cries the indignant lord. “For thou shalt

know this strong right hand of *mine* can *pluck the diadem from faint Henry's head*, and wring the awesome sceptre from his fist, were he as famous and as bold in *war* as he is famed for *mildness, peace, and prayer!*"

"I know it well, Lord Warwick," Richard now assures the prideful ally. "Blame me not! 'Tis love I bear thy *glories* makes me speak.

"But in this troublous time, what's to be *done*? Shall we go throw away our coats of *steel* and wrap our bodies in black *mourning* gowns, number *Ave-Maries* with our beads?—or shall we on the *helmets of our foes* count out our devotion with *vengeful arms*?"

"If for the last, say *Aye!*—and *to it*, lords!"

Again the earl replies to the younger and more forceful of the brothers: "Well, *therefore* Warwick came to *seek you out!* And therefore comes my brother Montague!

"Attend me, lords," says Warwick, moving closer. "The proud, insulting queen, with Clifford and the haughty Northumberland, and of *their* feather many *more* proud birds, have wrought the easy-melting king like *wax!* He *swore consent* to your succession, his *oath* enrolled in the *Parliament*—but now to London all the crew are gone, both to frustrate his oath and to make beside whatever they may against the House of Lancaster!

"Their army, I think, is thirty thousand strong!"

"Now, if the help of Norfolk and myself, with all the friends that thou, brave Earl of March,"—Edward, "canst procure amongst the loving *Welshmen*, will amount to but *five and twenty thousand*, why, *Via!*—to London will we march amain!—and once again bestride our foaming steeds, and once again cry, '*Charge!*' against *our foes!*"

"And never again turn back and fly!" he mutters, with dour resolve.

Richard nods. "*Aye!*—*now* methinks I hear great *Warwick* speak! Ne'er may he live to see a sunshine *day* that cries retire, if *Warwick* bid it stay!"

Edward agrees. "Lord Warwick, on thy shoulder will I lean; and when *thou* fail'st—as God forbid the hour!—must *Edward* fall—which peril Heaven forbend!"

"No longer Earl of March, but *Duke of York*," Warwick points out. "Thy *next* degree is *England's royal throne*: for *King of England* shalt thou be proclaimed in every borough as we pass along!—and he that throws not up his cap for *joy* shall for that fault make forfeit of his head!"

He faces the two York brothers and his own. "*King Edward*, valiant Richard, Montague, stay we no longer, *dreaming* of renown, but *sound the trumpets*, and *about our task!*"

Richard remembers the killing of his brother Edmund, Earl of Rutland. "Then, *Clifford*, were thy heart as hard as flint, as thou hast shown it by thy steely deeds, I come to *pierce* it!—or to give thee mine!"

"Then *strike up*, drums!" cries Edward. "*God and Saint George for us!*"

As they mounts their steeds, Warwick sees a soldier riding toward him past the long ranks. "How now! What news?"

"The Duke of Norfolk sends you word by me!—the *queen* is coming with a *puissant host!*—and he craves your company for speedy counsel!"

Warwick is pleased; they will confront a Lancastrian army—and at its head both king and queen. "Why thus it *sorts*, brave warriors!—*let's away!*"

Spurring their horses, the Yorkists spring forward to confer with Norfolk.

On the dirt road, their legions of foot-soldiers continue to plod along.

W elcome, my lord, to this brave town of *York*," Queen Margaret tells King Henry VI. She points to a pole leaning out from a high stone wall beside city's main gate.

"Yonder's the *head* of the archenemy that sought to be encompassed with your crown!"

She enjoys the gentle king's obvious distress. "Doth not the object cheer your heart, my lord?"

"*Aye!*—as the *rocks* cheer them that fear their *shipwreck!*" groans Henry. "To see this sight, it

irks my very soul!” He looks skyward. “Withhold *revenge*, dear God! *’Tis not my fault!*—nor wittingly have I infringèd my vow!”

“My gracious liege, this *too-much* lenity and *harmful* piety must be laid aside!” complains Baron Clifford, disgusted. “To whom do *lions* cast their *gentle* looks?—not to the beast that would *usurp their den!* Whose hand is it that the forest *bear* doth lick?—not his that *despoils her young before her face!* Who ’scapes the lurking *serpent*’s mortal sting?—not he that sets his foot upon her *back!*”

“The smallest *worm* will turn, being *trodden* on, and *doves* will peck in safeguard of their brood!

“Ambitious York did *level aim at thy crown!*—thou *smiling* while he knit his angry brows! He, but a duke, would have had his son a *king*, and raised *his* issue like a loving sire! Thou—*being* a king blest with a goodly son, didst yield consent to *disinherit* him!—which argued thee a most unloving father!

“*Unreasoning creatures* feed *their* young!—and though man’s face be fierce in their eyes, yet, in *protection* of their tender ones who hath not yet even seen them, with those wings which sometime they have used for fearful flight *make war* upon him that climbed unto their nest!—offer their *own* lives in their young’s *defence!*”

“For *shame*, my liege! Make *them* your precedent!” He nods toward Prince Edward, who is standing beside Lord Northumberland. “Were it not a pity that this goodly boy should *lose his birthright* by his *father*’s fault?—and long hereafter say unto *his* child, ‘What my great-grandfather and his grandsire got, my careless *father* foolishly *gave away!*’ *Ah*, what a shame were this! *Look* on the boy!—and let his manly face, which promiseth successful fortune, steel thy melting heart to *hold thine own*—and *leave* thine own with *him!*”

King Henry has reason to doubt the depth of the vengeful nobleman’s concern for the boy. “Full well hath Clifford played the *orator*, *inferring* arguments of mighty force. But, Clifford, tell me, didst thou never hear that *things ill-got* had ever *bad success?* And was it always *happy* for that son whose father, for his *hoarding*, went to *Hell?*”

“I’ll leave *my* son my *virtuous deeds* behind—and would that *my* father had left me *no more!* For all the rest is held at such a rate as brings a *thousand-fold* more cares in *keeping* than the jot of pleasure in *possession!*”

He stares up at the gruesome trophy atop the pike. “Oh, cousin York, I would that thy best friends did know how it doth grieve me that thy head is there!”

Demands Margaret harshly, “My lord, cheer up your spirits!—our *foes* are nigh, and this *soft* courage makes your followers feeble!

“You promised *knighthood* to our forward son. Unsheathe your sword,” she orders, “and dub him immediately. Edward, kneel down.”

Henry places the flat of his blade on the youth’s shoulder. “Edward Plantagenet, arise a knight; and learn this lesson: draw thy sword in *right!*”

The prince stands, scorn showing in his face. “My gracious father, by your kingly leave, I’ll draw it as *heir apparent to the crown!*—and in *that* quarrel, use it to the *death!*”

Clifford is delighted. “Why, that is spoken like a *toward* prince!”

A worried captain brings news. “Royal commanders, be in readiness! For with a band of *thirty thousand men* comes *Warwick!*—backing up *the Duke of York!* And in the towns as they do march along proclaiming him *king!* And many fly to him!

“Do arrange your battle,”—position your forces, “for they are *at hand!*”

“I would Your Highness would depart the field,” Clifford tells Henry bluntly. “The queen hath best success when you are absent.”

“Aye, good my lord; and leave us to *our* fortune,” says she.

Henry frowns. “Why, that’s *my* fortune *too!* Therefore I’ll stay.”

“Be it with resolution then to *fight!*” demands Northumberland.

“My royal father, *cheer on* these noble lords,” urges the prince, “and *hearten* those that fight

in your defence! Unsheathe your *sword*, good father!—cry ‘*Saint George!*’”

Near the city of York, two massive armies of Englishmen stand shivering in the chill on farmers’ land while their leaders meet to parley.

With Edward are his two younger brothers and Lords Warwick, Montague, and Norfolk. The new Duke of York confronts the King of England: “Now, *perjured Henry*, wilt thou kneel for *mercy*, and set thy diadem upon my head—or bide the mortal fortune of the *field?*”

“Go berate thy *minions*, proud insulting *boy!*” replies Queen Margaret angrily. “*Becomes* it thee to be thus bold in terms before thy *sovereign* and thy lawful *king?*”

“I am *his* king, and he should bow his knee!” says Edward indignantly. “I was adopted heir by *his consent!*—since when *his oath is broken!*” He glares at Margaret. “For, as I hear, *you*, who are king though he do wear the crown, have caused him, by *new* Act of Parliament, to blot out *me*, and put his *own* son in!”

“And with *reason!*” cries Clifford. “Who should succeed the *father* but the *son?*”

Richard turns toward him. “Are *you* there, *butcher?* *Oh*, I cannot *speak!*” he mutters, choking with rage.

Clifford taunts: “*Aye, crook-back,*”—Richard was born with a shoulder deformity, “here I stand to answer thee—or *any* he the proudest of *thy* sort!”

“’Twas you that killed young Rutland, was it not?”

“*Aye*, and *old* York!—and *still not satisfied!*”

Richard needs revenge. “For God’s sake, lords, give signal for the *fight!*” he shouts.

Warwick looks at the king: “What *say’st* thou, Henry; wilt thou yield the crown?”

Queen Margaret scoffs. “Why, how now, long-tongued *Warwick!* Dare *you* speak? When you and I met at *Saint Albans* last, your *legs* did better service than your hands!”

“Then ’twas my turn to fly,” says Warwick grimly, “and now ’tis *thine.*”

Clifford laughs. “You said so much before—and yet you *fled!*”

Warwick sneers. “’Twas not *your* valour, Clifford, drove me thence.”

“No—nor durst your *manhood* make you *stay!*” counters Northumberland.

“Northumberland, I hold *thee* reverently,” Richard tells the tall Lancastrian lord. “Break off the parley—for scarce I can refrain the execution of my big-swol’n heart upon that *Clifford!*—that cruel *child-killer!*”

“I slew thy *father*; call’st thou *him* a child?” demands Clifford.

The taunt disgusts Richard: “Braggèd like a *dastard* and a treacherous *coward!*—as when thou didst kill our tender brother Rutland! But ere sunset I’ll make thee *curse the deed!*”

King Henry raises a palm. “Have done with words, my lords, and hear me speak.”

“*Defy* them, then,” orders Queen Margaret, “or else hold closed thy lips!”

“I prithee, give no limits to my tongue,” says Henry. “I am a *king*, and privileged to speak.”

Clifford tells him, “My liege, the wounds that bred this meeting, here cannot be cured by *words!* Therefore be still.”

“Then, executioner, *unsheathe thy sword!*” cries Richard. “By Him that made us all, I am resolved that Clifford’s *manhood* will lie upon his *tongue!*”—an indignity inflicted upon a corpse.

Edward, Duke of York, steps toward the king. “*Say*, Henry!—shall I have my right, or no? A *thousand men* have broken their fasts today who ne’er shall dine”—again eat a noon meal—“unless thou *yield the crown!*”

“If thou *deny*, their blood upon thy head!” warns Warwick. “For York in *justice* puts his armour on!”

Young Prince Edward speaks with scorn: “If that be right which *Warwick* says is right, there is no *wrong*, but *everything* is right!”

“Whoever *begot* thee,”—fathered him, “there thy *mother* stands,” says Richard, pointing at the queen, “for well I wot thou hast thy mother’s *tongue!*”

“But *thou* art like neither thy sire *nor* dam,” retorts Margaret, “but like a foul, mis-shapen

stigmatic, marked by the Destinies to be avoided as are *vermin*, *toads*, or *lizards*' dreadful stings!"

Says Richard, "*Iron* of Naples hid with *English gilt*, whose father bears the *title* of a king—as if a *canal* should be called *the sea!*—*shamest* thou not, knowing whence thou art extraught, to let thy tongue reveal thy base-born heart?"

The Duke of York, too, has only contempt for the overbearing lady. "To make this shameless *callet*, a wisp of *straw*, *know herself* were worth a thousand crowns!" He faces her. "Although thy *husband* may be *Menelaus*, Helen of Troy was *fairer far* than *thou!* And never was he"—a legendary cuckold—"wrongèd by that false woman as *this king* by *thee!*" Margaret's affair with the late Lord Suffolk, who brought her from France, is widely known.

Edward continues: "His *father*"—Henry's father, King Henry V—"revelled in the heart of France, *tamed* its king, and made the dauphin *stoop!* And had he matched according to his *state*, he might have *kept* that glory to this day!"

"But when he took a *beggar* to his bed, and *graced* thy poor sire on his bridal-day,"—awarded two provinces to Margaret's father, "even then that sunshine brewed for him a *shower* that washèd his all father's fortunes from France, and heaped *sedition* on his crown at *home!*"

"For what hath broached this tumult but *thy pride?*" demands York. "Hadst thou been meek, our title still had *slept*; and we, in pity of the gentle king, had slipped our claim until another age."

George concurs. "But when we saw our sunshine made into *thy spring*, and that thy summer bred *us* no increase, we set the *ax* to thy usurping root! And though the edge hath somewhat cut ourselves, yet *know thou*: since we have *begun* to strike, we'll *never leave off* till we have *hewn thee down!*—or bathed thy growing with our heated *bloods!*"

"And in *that* resolution, I *defy thee!*" cries young Prince Edward, "not willing any longer 'conference,' since thou deniest the gentle *king* to *speak!*"

"*Sound* trumpets! Let our bloody colours wave! And either *victory* or else a *grave!*"

Queen Margaret has more to say. "Stay, Edward—"

"*No*, wrangling woman, we'll *no longer* stay!" insists the headstrong boy. "These words will cost *ten thousand lives* this day!"

Chapter Four Valorous Combat

On this snowy March afternoon, dark clouds hover low over the field of battle, between the towns of Towton and Saxton.

Lord Warwick is feeling the weight of the chain-mail and steel, and the chafing of cold-stiffened leather that secures his armor. He stops by a hillock, panting, and sweating despite the foggy chill.

Spent with toil, as runners with a race, I lay me down a little while to breathe! For strokes received, and many blows repaid, have robbed my strong-knit sinews of their strength, and 'spite of spite needs must I rest awhile!

But, hearing another man in armor running toward him, he rises and lifts his sword. He lowers the nicked and bloody blade when he recognizes Edward.

The duke is highly distraught. "Smile, gentle Heaven, or strike, ungentle Death!—for *this* world *frowns*, and Edward's sun is clouded!"

"How now, my lord! What hap?" asks Warwick, as Edward's brother joins them. "What hope of good?"

George replies: "Our hap is *loss*, our hope but sad *despair!* Our ranks are broken, and *ruin* follows us!" He looks hopefully at Warwick, a renowned warrior. "What *counsel* give you?" he asks the older man. "Whither shall we fly?"

But Edward moans in dismay. "Bootless is *flight!*—they follow us *with wings!* And, weak as

we are, and cannot shun pursuit!”

Now Richard finds them. “Oh, Warwick, why hast thou *withdrawn* thyself?” He has news of the earl’s half-brother, known as the Bastard of Salisbury: “*Thy brother’s blood* the thirsty earth hath drunk!

“Broachèd with the steely point of Clifford’s lance, in the very pangs of death, he cried, like a dismal clangour heard from afar, ‘*Warwick, revenge! Brother, revenge my death!*’ And so, beneath the bellies of the steeds that stained their fetlocks in his steaming blood, the noble, gentle man gave up the ghost!”

Warwick’s fury is renewed. “Then let the earth be *drunken* with our blood! *I’ll kill my horse, because I will not fly!*”

“Why *stand we here* like soft-hearted *women*?—bemoaning our losses whiles *the foe doth rage!*—and *look on*, as if the tragedy were played *in jest* by counterfeiting *actors!*”

He thrusts the point of his sword into the ground before him, kneels, and with both hands, reaches up to grasp the hilt. “Here on my knee I vow to God above!—I’ll never pause again, never stand still, till either Death hath closed these eyes of mine, or *Fortune* given me measure of *revenge!*”

Edward kneels at his side. “O Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine; and in this vow do chain my soul to thine!

“And, ere my knee rise from the earth’s cold face, I throw my hands, mine eyes, my *heart* to Thee, thou setter-up and plucker-down of kings, beseeching Thee, if with thy will it stands that to my foes this body must be prey, yet that thy brazen gates of *heaven* may ope, and give sweet passage to my sinful soul!”

Warwick rises, as does Edward. “Now, lords, take leave until we meet again, *where’er* it be, in heaven or on earth!” says the duke.

“Brother, give me thy hand!” cries Richard, “and, gentle Warwick, let me embrace thee in my weary arms! I, that did never weep, now melt with woe that winter should cut off our *spring-time* so!”

Warwick raises his sword high. “Away, *away!* Once more, sweet lords, *fare well!*”

George is heartened. “Yet let us all go *together* to our troops, and give them leave to fly who will not stay—and call them *pillars* who will *stand with us!*—and promise *them*, if we thrive, such rewards as victors wear at the *Olympian* games! This may plant courage in their quailing breasts; for yet is *hope* of life and victory!

“For, *slow no longer!*—make we hence *amain!*”

Richard exults: “*Now, Clifford, I have singled thee alone!*”

He brandishes a stained broadsword before his hated foe. “Suppose this arm is for the Duke of York!” He now grips the weapon with both hands. “And *this* for *Rutland!*—both bound to *revenge*, wert thou environed with a *brazen wall!*”

Clifford is defiant, almost gleeful. “*Now, Richard, I am with thee here alone!*” He raises a fist. “*This* is the hand that stabbed *thy father*, York; and *this* the hand that slew *thy brother Rutland!*”

“And here’s the heart that *triumphs* in their death, and urges these hands that slew thy sire and brother to *execute the like* upon *thyselves!*” He springs forward, swinging the blade. “And so, *have at thee!*”

They fight furiously, blades clanging, neither gaining immediate advantage. As they circle, gasping for breath, a nobleman comes to Richard’s aid, and Clifford must flee, disappearing into the luminous mist.

“Nay, Warwick, single out some other chase!” cries Richard, dashing away after Clifford, “for I *myself* will hunt *this* wolf to death!”

At a far side of the frigid field, Henry wanders away from the royal commanders, moving back from the fighting, as snow again flutters down through the dim overcast.

This battle fares like to a morning's war, when dying clouds contend with growing light—the time that the shepherd, blowing on his nails, can call neither perfect day nor night.

Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea forced by the tide to combat with the wind; now sways it that way, like the selfsame sea, forced to retire by fury of the wind! Sometime the flood prevails, and then the wind; now one the better, then another bests, both tugging to be victor, breast to breast, yet neither conqueror nor conquerèd!

So is the equality of this fell war!

Huddled within his dark, heavy cloak, he crouches beside the thick gray trunk of a long-dead tree at the edge of an old forest. *Here on this molehill will I sit me down.* He watches as the clumping white flakes of snow drift down more thickly.

To whom God will, there be the victory! For Margaret my queen, and Clifford, too, have chid me from the battle, swearing both they prosper best of all when I am thence.

Would I were dead!—if God's good will were so. For what is in this world but grief and woe?

With a broken piece of weathered branch he scratches a circle in the snow.

O God, methinks it were a happy life to be no better than a homely swain: to sit upon a hill, as I do now; to carve out dials quaintly, point by point... thereby to see the minutes, how they run; how many make the hour full complete; how many hours bring about the day; how many days will finish up the year; how many years a mortal man may live.

When this is known, then to divide the times: so many hours must I tend my flock; so many hours must I take my rest; so many hours must I contemplate; so many hours must I sport myself. So many days my ewes have been with young; so many weeks ere the poor fools will ean; so many years ere I shall shear the fleece.

Thus would minutes, hours, days, months, and years, passed over in the way they were created for, bring white hairs unto a quiet grave. Ah, what a life were that!—how sweet! How lovely!

Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade to shepherds looking on their frail sheep than doth a rich-embroidered canopy to kings that fear their subjects' treachery? Oh, yes, it doth!—a thousand-fold it doth!

And to conclude: the shepherd's homely curds, his cold, thin drink out of his leather bottle, his wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade, all of which securely and sweetly he enjoys, are far beyond a prince's delicacies—his viands glistening and a golden cup, his body couchèd in an exquisite bed—when care, mistrust, and treason wait on him!

He looks out, forlorn, through the slow-falling, feathery snow. Not far away, two men fade in and out of his view amid the soft, floating flakes; they meet, and seem to embrace. But they are fighting—and soon one falls. Henry moves back, to stand behind the tree-trunk.

The winner, a poor foot-soldier, looks around, then drags the corpse toward the woods. "Ill blows the wind that profits *nobody*," he mutters, his breath puffing in the cold air. *This man, whom hand to hand I slew in fight, may be possessèd with some store of crowns! And I, who haply take them from him now, may yet ere night yield both my life and them to some man else, as this dead man doth me!*

He kneels to search the pockets of the coarsely made old coat. Suddenly he stops. "*Who's this?*

"Oh, God!—it is my father's face—whom in this conflict I unwares have killed!" He moans, bleeding fists clutched at his head. *Oh, heavy times, begetting such events!*

From London by the king was I pressèd forth —conscripted into service. My father, being the Earl of Warwick's man, came here pressed by his master on the part of York. And I, who at his hands received my life, him have by my hands of life bereavèd him!

"Pardon me, God," he wails, rocking back and forth on his knees in agony. "*I knew not what I did!*"

He touches the dead man's face tenderly. "And pardon, *Father*, for I knew thee not! My tears shall wipe away these bloody marks!" he sobs. "And no more words, till they have flowèd their

fill!”

Henry stares, appalled. *Oh, piteous spectacle! Oh, bloody times! Whiles lions war and battle for their dens, poor harmless lambs abide their enmity!*

Weep, wretched man! I'll aid thee, tear for tear! And let our hearts and eyes, as if in civil war, be blind with tears, and break, o'erchargèd with grief!

Coming from near by, a harsh, angry growl startles him; he slides, fearfully, with his back pressed against the rough bole, to look.

A grizzled knight stands, gasping for breath, over his fallen enemy, pulled through the snowfall to hoarfrost-covered turf beneath an oak's last dry, brown leaves. “Thou that so stoutly hast *resisted* me, *give me thy gold*, if thou hast any gold,” he grumbles, bending down to search. “For I have *bought* it with an hundred blows!

“But let me see,” he says, pulling off the loser's helmet. “Is this our foeman's face?” He staggers back. “*Oh, no, no, no!*”

“It is mine only *son!*” He kneels and raises the young man's shoulders, cradling his head in the crook of an arm. “Ah, boy, if any *life* be left in thee, *throw ope thine eyes!*”

“See,” he sobs, “*see* what *showers* arise, blown with the windy *tempest* of my heart upon thine orbs, that kill *mine* eye and heart!

“What *stratagems!*—how fell, how *butcherly*, erroneous, mutinous and *unnatural!*—this deadly quarrel *daily* doth beget!

“Oh, *pity*, God, *this miserable age!* O boy, thy father gave thee life too late—and hath bereft thee of thy life *too soon!*”

Henry gapes, stunned and transfixed. *Woe above woe! Grief more than common grief! Oh, that my death would stay these rueful deeds! Oh pity, pity, gentle Heaven, pity!*

He looks at the dead youth. *The red rose and the white are on his face—the fatal colours of our striving houses. The one his purple blood right-well resembles; the other his pale cheeks methinks presenteth.*

Wither one rose, and let the other flourish!—if they further contend, a thousand lives must wither!

To the king's left, the shepherd's son is pondering his return home: “How my *mother*, for a father's death, will *take on* with me—and *ne'er be comforted!*” he moans.

At the right, the knight weeps, his face ashen. “How will my *wife*, for slaughter of my son, shed *seas of tears*, and *ne'er be comforted!*”

Henry wonders, sorrowfully, *How will the country, for these woeful chances, misthink of the king? And not be comforted.*

He hears the victors: “Was ever *son* so rued a father's death?” “Was ever *father* so bemoaned his son?”

Was ever king so grievèd for subjects' woe? Much is your sorrow; mine ten times so much!

The yeoman lifts his father. “I'll bear thee hence, where I may weep my fill,” he groans, carrying his burden into the forest's shadows.

The graybeard rises. “These arms of mine shall be thy winding-sheet! My *heart*, sweet boy, shall be thy sepulchre; for from my heart thine image *ne'er* shall go! My sighing breast shall be thy funeral bell; and as many obsequies will thy father perform for the loss of *thee*, having no more, as Priam for *all* his valiant sons!”

The knight wipes his eyes. “I'll bear thee hence. And let them fight who will—for I have *murdered* where I should not *kill!*” He struggles to lift the body, then slowly makes his way into the dim, silent woods.

Thinks Henry, weeping softly, *Sad-hearted men, much overcome with care, here sits a king more woeful than you are!*

He leans his head back against the ancient tree, lost in anguish as the brutal fighting goes on.

On these white fields of Yorkshire, more than twenty-eight thousand English men will die.

It is Palm Sunday, 1461.

“Fly, Father, fly!” calls Prince Edward, as Henry returns, “for all your friends are *fled*, and Warwick rages like a chafed bull!” With a blaring of trumpets and in a blur of banners, the queen’s party is rushing past, headed for their waiting horses. “*Away!* For *Death* doth hold us in pursuit!”

“*Mount* you, my lord!” cries Queen Margaret. “Towards Berwick *post amain!*”

“Edward and Richard—like a pair of *greyhounds* having a fearful, flying *hare* in sight—with *fiery eyes*, sparking for very *wrath*, and *bloody steel* grasped in their ireful hands, are at our *backs!*—and therefore *hence amain!*” She hurries away with their son.

The king stands alone, still dazed and thoughtful.

Old Lord Exeter rides back to him, trailing, by the reins, a horse for Henry. “*Away!*—for *Vengeance* comes along with them!” He raises a palm: “Nay, stay not to *expostulate!*—*make speed!*”

“Or else come after!” he cries, handing down the leather straps. “I’ll away *before!*”

“Nay, take me with thee, good, sweet Exeter,” sighs King Henry, sadly resigned. He climbs into the saddle. “Not that I fear to stay, but move to go whither the *queen* intends.

“Forward,” he murmurs. “*Away.*”

The black horse trots along after Exeter, headed north—toward Scotland.

Clifford has again escaped Richard, but he is grievously wounded. He staggers away from the battle in steadily deepening snow.

Here burns my candle out!—aye, here dies it, which, whiles it lasted, gave King Henry light!

He pictures the pitiable monarch. *O Lancaster, I fear thy overthrow more than my body’s parting with my soul! Love and fear of me glued many friends to thee—and now that I fall, thy tough commixture melts!*

The common people swarm like summer flies, and whither fly the gnats but to ’ the sun’?—strengthening misproud York, impairing Henry. And who shines now but Henry’s enemies?

O Phoebus, hadst thou never given consent that Phaethon should check thy fiery steeds, thy burning chariot had never scorched the earth! And Henry, hadst thou swayed as kings should do—or as thy father and his father did, giving no ground unto the House of York—they never then had sprung like summer flies!

Aye, and many thousand in this luckless realm had left no mourning widows for our deaths!

And thou hadst kept thy chair in peace this day! For what doth gentle air but cherish weeds? And what makes robbers bold but too much lenity?

Greatly weakened, he moans, drops his sword, and falls to the ground. *Bootless are plaints, and cureless are my wounds!—no way to fly, nor strength to hold out fight! The foe is merciless, and will not pity; for at their hands I have deserved no pity!*

Looking at the gashes in his side and arm, he groans. *The air hath got into my deadly wounds, and much effuse of blood doth make me faint....*

He falls back, grinding his teeth in pain. *Come, York and Richard, Warwick and the rest—I stabbed your fathers’ bosoms!—split my breast!*

With Richard and George, Edward, Duke of York, joins Warwick and his brother Montague after the reversal in the fighting.

“Now *breathe* we, lords!” says Edward. “Good fortune bids us pause and smooth the frowns of war with peaceful looks.

“Some troops are pursuing the bloody-minded queen that led calm Henry, though he were a king, as doth a *sail* filled with a *fretting gust* command an argosy to stem the waves!

“But think you, lords, that *Clifford* fled with them?”

Warwick witnessed the duel. “No, ’tis impossible he should escape!—for, though I speak the words before his face, *your brother Richard* marked him for the *grave!* And wheresoe’er he is,

he's surely dead."

They hear an agonized cry. "Whose soul is that which takes his heavy leave?" asks Edward, moving toward the sound.

Richard follows him. "A deadly groan, like life's parting at death!"

"See who it is," says Edward wearily, "and, now that the battle's ended, if friend or foe, let him be gently used."

Richard spots the fallen lord. "*Revoke* that doom of *mercy*, for 'tis *Clifford!*—who, not contented that he lopped the *branch*, in hewing Rutland when his leaves put forth, but set his murdering knife unto the *root* from whence that tender spray did sweetly spring!—I mean our princely *father*, Duke of York!"

Warwick stoops and removes the fallen lord's helmet; he seizes the baron's hair and pulls him up to a sitting position. "From off the gates of York *fetch down* the head!—your father's head, which Clifford placèd there—instead whereof let *this* supply that place! *Measure* for *measure* must be *answerèd!*"

Edward is very pleased. "Bring forth this fatal screech-owl, that nothing sang but *death* to us, to ours, and to our house! Now Death shall stop his dismal, threatening sound, and his ill-boding tongue no more shall speak!"

Warwick tugs at the hair with annoyance, shaking the face. "I think his understanding is bereft! *Speak*, Clifford!—dost thou know who speaks to thee?" Angrily he thrusts the head to the ground. "Dark, cloudy death o'ershades his living sight, and he neither sees us nor hears what we say."

"Oh, would that he *did!*" growls Richard, standing astride the body. "And so perhaps he *doth!*—'tis but his policy to *counterfeit*, because he would avoid such bitter taunts as he gave our father in the time of death!"

George steps closer. "If so thou think'st, *vex* him with eager words!"

"Clifford, ask *mercy*—but *obtain no grace!*" cries Richard.

Edward stares down. "Clifford, repent in *bootless penitence!*"

Warwick mocks: "Clifford, *devise excuses* for thy crimes!"

"While *we* devise fell *tortures* for thy faults!" adds George.

Says Richard, with heavy sarcasm, "Thou didst *love* York—and I am *son* to York!"

"As thou *pitied 'st* Rutland," says Edward. "I will pity *thee!*"

George taunts: "Where's *Captain Margaret*, to fence you now?"

"They *mock* thee, Clifford!" says Warwick, with specious concern. "*Swear* as thou wast *wont!*"

"*What?*—not one oath?" mutters Richard. "Nay, then, the world goes *hard* when *Clifford* cannot spare his friends an oath! I know by *that* he's *dead!*" He kicks viciously at the corpse. "Yet, by my soul, if this right hand would buy him two hour's *life* so that I in all despite might rail at him, *this* hand"—he raises his left fist—"should *chop it off*, and with the issuing blood *stifle* the villain whose unstanched *thirst* York and young Rutland could not satisfy!"

"Aye, but he *is* dead," says Warwick. "Off with the traitor's head, and rear it in the place your father's stands."

He faces Edward. "And now to *London* with triumphant march, there to be crownèd *England's royal king!*"

"From whence shall Warwick cut the sea to *France*, and ask for the *Lady Bona* to be thy *queen!*"

"So shalt thou sinew both these lands together!—and, having France thy *friend*, thou shalt not dread the scattered foe that hopes to rise again! For, though they cannot greatly *sting* to *hurt*, yet look to have them *buzz* to *offend* thine ears!"

"First will I see the *coronation*; and then to Brittany I'll cross the sea, to effect this marriage, so it please my lord."

Edward nods agreement. "Even as thou wilt, sweet Warwick, let it be! For *by thy shoulder* do

I build my seat, and never will I undertake a thing wherein thy counsel and consent are wanting.

“Richard, I will create thee *Duke of Gloucester*; and George, *Duke of Clarence*.

“Warwick as if *ourselves* shall do and undo what pleaseth him best.”

Says Richard, the youngest surviving son, “Let *me* be Duke of *Clarence*, *George* of Gloucester—for Gloucester’s dukedom is too *ominous*.” The two previous lords of Gloucester came to miserable ends.

Warwick scoffs: “*Tsk*, that’s a foolish observation! Richard, be Duke of *Gloucester*.

“Now to *London*, to see these honours in *possession!*”

Chapter Five Kingship

Deep within a royal forest preserve at the far north of England, along its border with Scotland, two keepers of the game have moved silently to the brush beside an open space, their cross-bows in hand, ready to begin judicious thinning of a herd grown too populous over the summer.

“Under this thick-grown brake we’ll shroud ourselves; for through this glade anon the deer will come,” the older man advises, “and in this covert will we make our stand, culling the principal of all those deer.”

“I’ll stay above, on the hill, so both may shoot,” offers his companion.

“That cannot be: the noise of thy cross-bow will scare the herd, and so my shot is lost. Here stand we both, and aim we at the best!

“And, so the time shall not seem tedious, I’ll tell thee what befell me on a day in this self-same place where now we mean to stand.”

But the younger keeper hears footfalls among the trees. “Here comes a *man!* Let’s stay till he be past.” They duck down, to avoid diversion from their duties.

A pensive gentleman, one hand stroking his beard, the other, behind his back, clasping a prayerbook, makes his way among the dappled shadows. He stops to look around the dell, and smiles. He takes a deep breath, and pauses to savor the greenwood’s warm, fragrant air.

From Scotland am I stol’n, even out of pure love, to greet mine own land with my wishful sight! thinks the disguised King Henry VI.

But the fugitive’s reverie is troubled. “*No, Harry!—Harry, ’tis no land of thine! Thy place is filled, thy sceptre wrung from thee, thy balm washèd off wherewith thou wast anointed!*”—by the Lord God, as part of his coronation.

“No bending knee will hail *thee* ‘Caesar’ now, no humble suitors press to speak for *right!*—no, not a man comes for redress from *thee!*”

“For how can I help *them*, and not *myself?*”

- The old hunter whispers, “*Ay, here’s a deer whose skin’s a keeper’s fee!—this is the quondam king!* Let’s seize upon him!”

Unaware of the men, Henry sits on a mossy log. He sighs. “Let me *embrace* thee, sour adversity; for wise men say it is the wisest course.”

- “Why linger we?” asks the eager young man, his voice low. “Let us lay hands upon him!”

- “Forbear awhile; we’ll hear a little more.”

King Henry looks up to address the ancient English trees as if they were tall, stately courtiers. “My queen and son are gone to *France* for *aid*—and, as I hear, the great, commanding *Warwick* is thither gone to crave the French king’s sister-in-law as wife for Edward.” He looks down, holding the well-worn book in both hands. “If this news be true, poor queen and son, your labour is but lost!—for Warwick is a subtle *orator*, and Lewis”—King Louis XI—“a prince *soon won* with moving words.”

But he reconsiders: “By that account, then, *Margaret* may win him—for she’s a woman much

to be *pitied!* Her *sighs* will make a volley in his breast! Her *tears* will pierce into a *marble* heart; a *tiger* will be mild whiles *she* doth mourn—and *Nero* would be tainted with *remorse*, to hear her plaints and see her brinish tears!”

He stands and paces. “Aye, but she’s come to *beg*, *Warwick* to *give*; she, on his left side, craving *aid* for Henry, *he*, on his right, asking a *wife* for *Edward!* She *weeps*, and says her Henry is deposed; he *smiles*, and says his Edward is *installed!* Then she, poor wretch, in grief can speak no more—whiles Warwick tells his tale, smoothes the wrong, inferreth arguments of mighty strength, and in conclusion *wins* the king from her, with promise of his sister-in-law and whatever else to strengthen and support King *Edward’s* place!

“Oh, Margaret, thus ’twill be!—and thou, poor soul, art then *forsaken*—and, as thou went’st, *forlorn!*”

The young hunter ends the king’s ruminaton: “*Say!* What art *thou* that talk’st of kings and queens?” he demands, emerging from the brush.

Henry only regards him sadly. “More than I seem, and less than I was born to. A *man* at least, for less I should not be; and men may talk of kings, so why not I?”

“Aye, but *thou* talk’st as if thou wert a king....”

“Why, so I *am*, in *mind*; and that’s enough.”

“But if thou be a king, where is thy crown?”

“My crown is in my *heart*, not on my head, not decked with diamonds and precious stones, nor to be seen. My crown is called *contentment*.

“A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.”

The hunter points his crossbow as the older keeper comes to his side. “Well, if you be a king crownèd with contentment, your crown and *you* must be contented to *go along with us!*—for as *we* think, you are the king King Edward hath deposèd—and we his subjects, sworn in all allegiance, will *apprehend* you as his enemy!”

“But, did you never swear, then *break* an oath?”

“*No, never* such an oath—nor will not now!” says the hunter proudly.

“Where did you dwell when *I* was King of England?”

“Here in this country where we now remain.”

“I was *anointed king* at nine months old,” Henry tells the men. “My *father* and my *grandfather* were kings—and *you* were sworn true subjects unto *me!* So tell me, then—have you not *broken your oaths?*”

“No,” says the old man, “for we were your *subjects* but while you were *king.*”

“*What?*—am I *dead?*” demands Henry, indignantly. “Do I not breathe as a man? *Ah*, simple men, you know not *what* you swear!”

Fearlessly he plucks a bit of goose-down from a stain on the hunter’s jerkin. “Look as I blow this *feather* from my face, and as the air blows it *to me* again—obeying with my wind when I do blow, and yielding to another when *it* blows—commanded always by the *greater gust*. Such is the lightness of you common men!

“But *do not break your oaths!* For of that *sin*, my mild entreaty shall not make you guilty! Go wherever you will, the *king* shall be thy commander. And, be *you* kings, command, and *I’ll* obey.”

“We are *true* subjects to the king—King Edward,” insists the graybeard.

“So would you be again to *Henry*, if he were *seated* as ‘King Edward’ is.”

The older man lifts his weapon, its arrow aimed at Henry’s heart. “We charge you, in God’s name and the king’s, to go with us unto the officers!”

Mild Henry regards him patiently. “In *God’s* name, lead; *my* King’s name be obeyèd.” He walks ahead of the men, south toward the village. “What He will, I humbly yield unto.

“And what God will, that let *your king perform!*”

At the palace in London, King Edward IV holds court—and is delighted to see that a beautiful petitioner has just entered the throne room.

“Brother of Gloucester,” he tells Richard privately, “at Saint Albans field this lady’s husband, Sir John Grey, was slain, his lands then seized on by the conqueror. Her suit is now to repossess those lands—which we in justice cannot well *deny*, because in the quarrel the worthy gentleman did lose his life for the House of York.”

Richard agrees. “Your Highness shall do well to grant her suit; it were *dishonour* to deny it her.”

“It were no less,” says Edward, thinking, “but yet I’ll make a *pause*...”

- Richard turns to George, now Duke of Clarence, and says, dryly, “I see that the *lady* hath a thing to grant, before the king will grant her humble suit! Yea, is it so?”

- George grins. “He knows the *game!*”—his quarry. “How true he keeps to the wind!”—avoids alerting his prey.

- “*Silence,*” whispers Richard, watching with amusement.

Edward smiles charmingly as the lovely noblewoman approaches. “Widow, we will consider of your suit; then come some other time to know our mind.”

Lady Elizabeth steps forward, her silken gown rustling softly. “Right gracious lord, I cannot brook delay; may it please Your Highness to resolve me now. And what *your* pleasure is shall satisfy me.”

- “*Aye, widow?*” murmurs Richard. “Then I’ll warrant you *all your lands*, if what pleasures *him* shall please *you!* Fight *closer,*” he urges, “or, i’ good faith, you’ll catch but a *blow!*”

- George evaluates the match, considering the lady’s quite-apparent attributes. “I doubt her not,” he says knowingly, “unless by *chance* she fall.”

- “God forbid *that*—for he’ll take vantages!” says Richard.

King Edward considers carefully. “How many children hast thou, widow, tell me.”

- Says George, in facetious indignation, “I think he means to beg a *child* from her!”

- “Nay, whip me then!—he’ll rather *give* her *two!*”

“Three, my most gracious lord,” says the Lady Grey proudly.

- Richard smirks. “You shall have *four*, if you’ll be ruled by him!”—the seduction seems childish.

The king regards her. “’Twere pity they should lose their father’s land...”

“Be pitying, dread lord, and *grant* it them.”

Edward rises and approaches his brothers. “Lords, give us *leave!*” he says—peevish at their ill-concealed levity. *I’ll try this widow’s wit*, he thinks, returning to the Lady Grey.

- “*Aye, good leave have you,*” mutters Richard, as he and George move away from the throne, to observe out of earshot, “for you will have leave till *youth* take leave”—age sets in—“and leave you to the crutch!”

“Now tell me, madam,” Edward begins, “do you *love* your children?”

“*Aye, full as dearly as I love myself.*”

“And would you not do *much* to do them good?”

She nods. “To do them good I would sustain some harm.”

“Then *get your husband’s lands*, to do them good.”

“Therefore I came unto Your Majesty,” she notes, politely.

“I’ll tell you how these lands are to be got.”

“So shall you bind me to Your Highness’ service!” says Elizabeth happily.

Edward surveys her buxom form. “What service wilt thou do me, if I give them?”

“What *you* command, that rests in me to *do.*”

He frowns. “But will you take *exception* to my boon?”

“No, gracious lord, except if I *cannot* do it.”

“*Aye, and thou canst* do what I mean to ask.”

She smiles. "Why, then I will do what Your Grace commands."

- "He plies her hard—much as the *rain* wears down *marble*," says Richard sourly; dissembling doesn't trouble him, but he despises delay.

- George can see Edward's eager face: "As red as *fire!* *Ay*, then her wax must *melt!*"

Lady Elizabeth seems puzzled. "Why stops my lord; shall I not hear my task?"

Edward tells her, "An easy task: 'tis but to love a *king*."

She nods. "That's soon performed, because I am a subject."

"Why, then, thy husband's lands I freely give thee!"

The lady curtsies, smiling. "I take my leave, with many thousand thanks!"

- "The match is *made*; she seals it with a curtsy," Richard concludes.

"But *stay* thee," says the king, as she starts away, "'tis the *fruits* of love I mean!"

"The fruits of love *I* mean, my loving liege."

"*Aye*, but, I fear me, in another *sense*. What love, think'st thou, I sue so much to get?"

Lady Elizabeth faces him serenely. "My love till death, my humble thanks, my prayers—that love which virtue begs and Virtue grants."

"*No*, by my troth, I did *not* mean such love!"

"Why, then you meant not as I thought you did."

Edward takes her hand. "But *now* you partly may perceive my mind...."

Elizabeth withdraws her hand. "My mind will never grant what I perceive Your Highness aims at, if I aim aright!"

"To tell thee plain, I aim to lie with thee."

"To tell *you* plain, I had rather lie in prison!"

"Why then thou shalt not have thy husband's lands."

"Why then mine *honesty* shall be my dower; for by *that* loss I will not purchase them."

"Therein thou wrong'st thy children mightily!"

"Herein Your Highness wrongs *both them and me!*" But now she pretends he is testing her, and playfully. "But, mighty lord, this merry inclination accords not with the gravity of my suit! Please you dismiss me with either 'aye' or 'no.'"

"*Aye*, if thou wilt say 'aye' to my request; *no* if thou dost say 'no' to my demand."

"Then, *no*, my lord. My suit is at an end."

- "The widow likes him not; she knits her brows," says Richard.

- George shakes his head at his older brother's current attempt. "He is the bluntest wooer in Christendom!"

Edward watches, stricken, as the Lady Grey walks away. *Her looks do argue her replete with modesty!—her words do show her wit incomparable!—all her perfections challenge sovereignty! One way or other, she is for a king!—and she shall be my love—or else my queen!*

He goes to her. "Say that King Edward take thee for his *queen?*"

"'Tis better *said* than done, my gracious lord," she replies. "I am a subject fit to *jest* withal, but far unfit to be a sovereign."

"Sweet widow, by my *state* I swear to thee, I speak no more than what my *soul* intends—and that is to enjoy thee for my *love!*"

"And that is more than I will yield unto! I know I am too mean"—lowly—"to be your queen, and yet too good to be your concubine."

But Edward, fully smitten, is determined. "You cavil, widow. I did *mean* my *queen!*"

She sees that he is speaking in earnest. "'Twill grieve Your Grace that my sons should call you *Father*...."

Edward smiles. "No more than when my *daughters* call thee *Mother*. Thou art a widow, and thou hast some children; and, by *God's* Mother, I, being but a bachelor, have *others'* some!" he admits boldly. "Why, 'tis a *happy* thing to be the father unto many sons!"

"Answer no more, for thou shalt be my queen!" He takes her hands in his—and she returns his gaze.

- Says Richard, "The *ghastly father* now hath done his *shrift!*"—a pernicious priest has prescribed penance, as if a confessor.

- "When *he* was made a shriver," chuckles George, "'twas for *shift!*"—in an exchange.

Edward brings the smiling lady to them. "Brothers, you muse about what chat we two have had..."

Richard teases: "The widow likes it not, for she looks very serious."

"You'd think it strange if I should *marry* her?" asks Edward, beaming at the lady.

"To *whom*, my lord?" asks George.

"Why, Clarence, to *myself!*"

"That would be a '*ten-days wonder*' at the least," says Richard, expecting another short-lived romance.

"*That's a day longer than wonder lasts!*" says George.

"By so much is the wonder *in extremis!*" says Richard.

Edward laughs. "Well, *jest on*, brothers! But I can tell you both that her suit for her husband's lands is *granted.*"

A knight comes to the king and bows. "My gracious lord, your foe *Henry* is *taken*, and brought as prisoner to your palace gate!"

Edward is delighted. "See that he be conveyed unto the Tower! And I'll go, brothers, to the man that took him, to question of his apprehension!"

He smiles again at the lady. "Widow, go you along. Lords, use her honourably!" he tells the courtiers, knowing that talk will begin immediately. He leaves the throne room, hand in hand with Lady Elizabeth.

The new Duke of Gloucester watches. He tells his brother, wryly, "Aye, *Edward* will use women *honourably!*"

Although his demeanor among the nobles matches George's customary indulgence, Richard is greatly perturbed by Edward's intended marriage. *Would he were wasted, marrow, bones and all, so that from his loins no hopeful branch may spring to cross me from the golden time I look for!*

Now, between me and my soul's desire—the lustful Edward's title—yet to be buried are Clarence, Henry, and his son, young Edward!—and all the unlooked-for issue of their bodies who'd take their rooms ere I can place myself!

A cold premeditation on my purpose! he admits. *Why, then I do but dream of sovereignty!—like one that stands upon a promontory and spies a far-off shore where he would tread, wishing his foot were equal with his eye, and chides the sea that sunders him from thence, saying he'll ladle it dry to have his way!*

So do I wish the crown, being so far off.

But so do I chide any means that keeps me from it!—and so do I say I'll cut off the causes that dissuade me with 'impossibilities!'

He paces. *Mine eye's too quick, my heart o'erweens too much, unless my hand and strength could equal them!*

Well, say there is no kingdom, then, for Richard; what other pleasure can the world afford?

I'll deck my body in gay ornaments, and 'witch sweet ladies with my words and looks!—and make my heaven in a lady's lap!

He stops. *Oh, miserable thought!—and more unlikely than to accomplish twenty golden crowns! Why, Love forswore me in my mother's womb!*

And, so that frail I should not deal in Nature's soft laws, Cupid did corrupt her with some bribe: to shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub!—to make an invidious mountain on my back, where deformity sits to mock my body!—to shape my legs of an unequal size!—to disproportion me in every part, like to a jumble, or an unlickèd bear-whelp that carries no impression like the dam!

Am I then a man to be beloved?

He laughs harshly—bitterly. *O monstrous fault, to harbour such a thought!*

Then, since this earth affords no joy to me but to command—to check, to o’erbear such as are of better person than myself—I’ll make it my heaven to dream upon renown!—and, while I live, to account this world but hell until my head, that this mis-shapen trunk bears, be round empalèd with a glorious crown!

And yet I know not how to get the crown, for many lives stand between me and home. And I—like one lost in a thorny wood, who rends the thorns and is rent by the thorns, seeking a way and straying from the way, not knowing how to find the open air, but toiling desperately to find it out—torment myself to catch the English crown!

But from that torment I will free myself, or hew my way out with a bloody ax!

Why, I can smile, and murder while I smile, say ‘content’ to that which grieves my heart; and wet my cheeks with artificial tears; and frame my face to all occasions!

I’ll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall! I’ll slay more gazers than the basilisk! I’ll play the orator as well as Nestor, deceive more slyly than Ulysses could, and like a Sinon take another Troy!

I can add colours to the chameleon, change shapes with Proteus for advantage, and send the murderous Machiavel to school!

Can I do this, and cannot get the crown?

Tsk, were it further off I’d pluck it down!

Chapter Six Royal Alliances

Crowned less than a year ago, Louis XI stands beside two heavy but finely carved oak chairs at the front of a grand reception hall in his palace at Rheims. “Fair Queen of England, worthy Margaret, sit down with us! It ill-befits thy state and birth that thou shouldst stand while Louis doth sit!”

“No, mighty King of France,” says she tearfully, “now Margaret must strike her sail, and learn awhile to serve where kings *command*.”

“I was, I must confess, great Albion’s queen in former, golden days. But now mischance hath trod my title down, and with dishonour laid me on the ground, where I must take like seat unto my *fortune*, and to my humble state conform myself.”

“Why, say, fair queen: whence springs this deep despair?”

Margaret, her son at her side, looks down sadly. “From such a cause as fills mine eyes with tears, and stops my tongue, while heart is drowned in cares!”

“Whate’er it be, be thou still like *thyself*, and sit thee by our side,” urges Louis, motioning elegantly. “Yield not thy neck to Fortune’s yoke, but let thy dauntless mind still ride in triumph over all mischance!” She seats herself, and he takes the chair beside her. “Be plain, Queen Margaret, and tell thy grief; it shall be *eased*, if France can yield relief!”

She smiles—wanly. “Those gracious words *revive* my drooping thoughts, and give my tongue-tied *sorrows* leave to speak.

“Now, therefore, be it known to noble Louis, that *Henry*, sole possessor of my love, is a king become a *banished man*, and forced to live in Scotland, forlorn!—while proud, ambitious Edward, Duke of York, *usurps* the regal title and the seat of England’s *truly anointed, lawful* king!

“That is the cause for which I, poor Margaret, with this my son, Prince Edward, Henry’s heir, am come to crave thy just and lawful *aid*.”

“And if thou fail us, all our hope is done! Scotland hath *will* to help, but *cannot* help; our people and our peers are both *misled*, our treasures *seized*, our soldiers put to flight, and, as thou seest, ourselves in heavy plight!” She dabs at her eyes with a finely embroidered silk

handkerchief.

“Renowned queen, with patience calm the storm,” says Louis, “while we bethink a means to break it off.”

“The more we stay, the stronger grows our foe!” moans Margaret.

“The more *I* stay, the more I’ll *succor* thee,” he says kindly.

“Ah, but *impatience* waiteth on true sorrow!”

As she again wipes her cheek, she spots another petitioner from England just arriving at the French court. “And see where comes the *breeder* of my sorrow!” she cries angrily.

“What’s he that approacheth boldly to our presence?” asks the king.

She frowns. “One *Earl of Warwick—Edward’s* greatest friend!”

The king rises. “Welcome, brave Warwick! What brings thee to France?” He goes to meet the general.

Margaret stands. *Ay!—now begins a second storm to rise! For this is he that moves both wind and tide!*

Lord Warwick bows deeply. “From worthy *Edward, King of Albion!*—my lord and sovereign, and *thy* vowed *friend!*—I come in kindness and unfeigned love: first, to do *greetings* to thy royal person; and then to crave a league of *amity*; and lastly, to *confirm* that amity with a *nuptial knot!*—if thou vouchsafe to grant that virtuous *Lady Bona*, thy fair sister-in-law, to England’s king in lawful *marriage!*”

Margaret pales. *If that go forward, Henry’s hope is done!*

Warwick goes to Lady Bona, who is standing near the king. “And, gracious madam, in our king’s behalf I am commanded, with your leave and favour, humbly to kiss your hand,”—he does so—“and with my tongue to tell the passion of my sovereign’s heart!—where Fame, lately entering at his heedful ears, hath placèd thy *beauty’s* image, and thy *virtue!*”

Margaret rises and steps forward. “King Louis and Lady Bona, hear me speak before you answer Warwick!

“His demand springs not from Edward’s well-meant, honest *love*, but from *deceit* bred by *necessity!*—for how can *tyrants* safely govern *home* unless abroad they purchase great alliance?” That question that has already occurred to the astute French monarch—who is himself concerned with reigning in safety.

Margaret glares at Edward’s emissary. “To prove him tyrant, *this* reason may suffice: *King Henry liveth still!*—and were he dead, yet here stands *Prince Edward*, that Henry’s son!

“Look, therefore, Louis, that by this league and marriage thou draw not on thee *danger* and *dishonour*,” she warns, “for though usurpers sway to rule *a while*, yet heavens are just, and time suppresseth wrongs!”

Warwick scowls at her. “*Injurious* Margaret!”

Young Prince Edward is offended: “And why not ‘*Queen*’?”

“Because thy ‘*father*’—Henry—did *usurp!*” says Warwick; among English courtiers, some wonder if Margaret’s son is in fact Henry’s son. “And thou no more are *prince* than she is *queen!*”

The Earl of Oxford, traveling with Margaret and Edward, objects angrily: “Then Warwick disannuls great *John of Gaunt*, who did subdue the greatest part of Spain; and, after John of Gaunt, *Henry the Fourth*, whose wisdom was a mirror to the wisest; and, after that wise prince, *Henry the Fifth*, who by his prowess *conquered all of France!*”

The French sovereign and his court silently note the exaggeration—one that hardly flatters them.

“From those *our Henry* lineally descends!” says Oxford.

Demands Warwick, “Oxford, how haps it, in this smooth discourse, you told not how Henry the Sixth hath *lost* all that which Henry Fifth had gotten? Methinks these peers of France should *smile* at *that!* And, as for the rest, you tell a pedigree of”—he shrugs—“threescore and two years—scarcely time to make restriction for a *kingdom’s* worth!”

“Why, Warwick, canst thou speak against *thy liege*—whom *thou obeyed'st thirty and six years!*—and not *bewray thy treason* with a *blush?*”

“Can Oxford, that did ever *fence* with the *right*,”—quibble, “now buckler *falsehood* with a *pedigree?*”—shield treachery with genealogy. “For *shame!*” cries Warwick. “Leave Henry, and call *Edward* king!”

Oxford is furious. “Call *him* my king by whose injurious doom *my elder brother*, the Lord *Aubrey Vere*, was *done to death?* And *more*: so was my *father*, even in the downfall of his mellowed years, when *Nature* brought him to the door of Death!

“No, Warwick, *no!*—while life upholds this arm, this arm upholds *the House of Lancaster!*”

“And I the House of *York!*” cries Warwick.

Dissension among Englishmen pleases the French lords; but now Louis asserts his authority here. “Queen Margaret, Prince Edward, and Oxford, vouchsafe, at our request, to stand aside, while I use further conference with Warwick.”

He beckons that nobleman forward; the others move away, fuming.

Margaret watches Louis. *Heavens grant that Warwick's words bewitch him not!*

The king speaks quietly. “Now, Warwick, tell me, even upon thy *conscience*: is Edward your true king? For I were loath to link with him that were not lawfully chosen.”

“Thereon I pawn my credit and mine honour!”

Louis nods acceptance. “But is he gracious in the *people's* eyes?”

“All the *more* since Henry was unfortunate,” Warwick tells him.

“Then further: dissembling set aside, tell me for truth the measure of his love unto our sister-in-law Bona.”

“Such, it seems, as may *beseem* a monarch like himself,” says Warwick carefully; but he sees that the equivocation does not satisfy the cautious king. “Myself have often heard him say, and *swear*, that this, his *love*, was an *eternal plant*, whereof the root was fixèd in *Virtue's* ground, the leaves and fruit maintained with *Beauty's* sun!—exempt from doubt!—but not from *worry*, unless the Lady Bona acquit his pain!”

The king summons her. “Now, Sister, let us hear your firm resolve.”

“*Your* grant, or your denial, shall be *mine*,” the lady replies dutifully. She turns to Warwick. “Yet I confess that often ere this day, when I have heard your king's deserts recounted, mine ear hath tempted judgment toward desire,” she says, blushing.

King Louis moves to the front, facing his courtiers. “Then, Warwick, thus: our sister shall be *Edward's!* And now forthwith shall articles be drawn touching the jointure that your king must make, which with her dowry shall be counterpoisèd.

“Draw near, Queen Margaret, and be a witness that Bona shall be wife to the English king!”

“To *Edward*,” protests the young prince, “but not to the *English king!*”

“*Deceitful Warwick!*” cries the boy's mother. “It was *thy* device by this alliance to make void my suit! Before *thy* coming, Louis was Henry's *friend!*”

“And still *is* friend to him—and to Margaret,” says Louis. “But if your title to the crown be weak, as may appear by Edward's good *success*, then 'tis but reason that I be released from giving aid which of late I promised.

“Yet shall you have all kindness at my hand that *your* estate requires, and mine can yield,” he says courteously.

Warwick glares at her. “Henry now lives at his ease in *Scotland*—where *having* nothing, nothing can he *lose!* And as for you yourself, our quondam queen, you have a *father* able to maintain you—and better 'twere you troubled *him* than France!” Her father is, nominally, King of Naples, and was granted French territory upon her marriage.

“*Peace*, impudent and *shameless* Warwick,” cries Margaret, “peace, proud *setter up* and *puller down* of kings! I will not go hence till with my talk and tears, *both* full of *truth*, I make King Louis behold thy *sly contriving*, and thy lord's *false love!*—for both of you are birds of selfsame feather!”

A cornet sounds at the wide doors, signaling the arrival of a messenger. "Warwick, this is some post to us or thee," says Louis, as an Englishman holding papers walks toward them.

"My lord ambassador, these letters are for you," says the man, bowing to Warwick, "sent from your brother the Marquis of Montague." He bows before King Louis. "These from our king unto Your Majesty." He goes to Margaret and bows curtly. "And, madam, these for you; from whom I know not."

- As the three read their missives, Oxford comments quietly to Prince Edward: "I like it well that our fair queen and mistress smiles at her news, while Warwick frowns at his!"

- "Aye, mark how Lewis stands, as if he were nettled!" whispers the boy. "I hope all's for the best..."

Louis looks up from his letter. "Warwick, what are *thy* news? And yours, fair queen?"

Margaret beams. "Mine, such as fill my heart with unhoped-for *joys!*"

Warwick frowns. "Mine, full of sorrow and heart's discontent."

King Louis crumples his letter angrily. "*What?*—has your king *married the Lady Grey!*

"And now, to *soothe* your *forgery* and *his*, sends me a *paper* to persuade me to *patience?*

"Is *this* the alliance that he seeks with France?" he cries, furious. "*Dare* he presume to *scorn* us in this manner?"

"I *told* Your Majesty as much before!" says Margaret. "This proveth *Edward's* love—and Warwick's *honesty!*"

Red-faced with rage, the English general faces the angry sovereign. "King Lewis, I here protest, in sight of Heaven and by the hope I have of heavenly bliss, that I am *clear* of this *misdeed* by *Edward!*—no longer my king, for he *dishonours* me!—but most *himself*, if he could *see* his shame!

"Did I forget that by the House of York *my father* came untimely to his *death?*

"Did I let *pass* the abuse done to my *niece?*"—whom Edward had propositioned.

"Did I empale his head with the regal *crown?*

"Did I put *Henry* from his native right?

"And am I *guerdone*"—rewarded—"at the last with *shame?*

"Shame on *himself!*—for *my* desert is *honour!*

"And to *repair* my honour, *lost* for him, I here *renounce* him, and return to *Henry!*"

He faces Margaret. "My noble queen, let former grudges pass, and henceforth I am *thy true servitor!*

"I will *revenge* this wrong to Lady Bona!—and replant *Henry* in his *former* state!"

Queen Margaret appears, at least, to be gracious. "Warwick, these words have turned my hate to *love*; and I forgive and quite forget old faults, and joy that thou becomest King Henry's friend!"

"So *much* his friend—*aye*, his *unfeignèd* friend!" says Warwick, "that if King Lewis vouchsafe to furnish us with some few bands of chosen *soldiers*, I'll undertake to land them on our coast, and *force the tyrant from his seat* by war!"

"'Tis not his new-made *bride* shall succor him!" adds the earl scornfully. "And as for *Clarence*,"—King Edward's brother George, "my letters tell me *he's* very likely now to fall away from him, for making more for wanton *lust* than for *honour*—than for the strength and safety of our *country!*"

The insulted French lady appeals to Louis. "Dear brother, how shall Bona be *revenged* but by *thy help* to this distressed queen?"

Margaret comes to her side. "Renownèd prince, how shall poor Henry live, unless *thou* rescue him from foul despair?"

"My quarrel and this English queen's are *one*," Bona tells him.

Warwick bows to her. "And *mine*, fair lady Bona, joins with *yours!*"

"And mine with hers, and Margaret's, and *thine*," King Louis tells Lord Warwick. "Therefore at the last am I firmly resolvèd you shall have *aid!*"

“Let me give humble thanks for all at once,” says Margaret happily.

“Then, England’s messenger, return *in post!*” says Louis heatedly, “and tell false Edward, thy *supposed* king, that *Louis of France* is sending over *masquers* to *revel* it with him and his new bride!

“Thou seest what’s passed—go *scare thy king withal!*”

“Tell him,” says Lady Bona, her face grim, “that I’ll wear a *willow* garland for his sake—in hope he’ll prove a *widower* shortly!”

“Tell him my *mourning* clothes are *laid aside*,” says Margaret angrily, “and I am ready to put *armour* on!”

“Tell him from *me* that he hath done me *wrong!*” cries Warwick, “and therefore I’ll *uncrown* him ere’t be long!

“*There’s* thy reward!” He offers Edward’s man no gold. “Be gone!”

The courier bows and hurries away, bound for Calais on horseback, then for a voyage to England and another ride on to London.

King Louis will soon send more than word: “But, Warwick, thou and Oxford with *five thousand men* shall cross the seas, and bid false Edward *battle!*”

“And, as occasion serves, this noble *queen* and *prince* shall follow with a *fresh* supply!

“Yet, ere thou go, but answer me one doubt,” says the king to Warwick. “What *pledge* have we of thy firm loyalty?”

“*This* shall assure my constant loyalty!—that, if our queen and this young *prince* agree, I’ll join mine younger daughter and my joy to him forthwith in *holy wedlock bands!*”

Margaret is pleased. “Yes, I *agree*, and *thank* you for your motion!

“Son Edward, she is fair and virtuous! Therefore delay not!—give thy hand to Warwick—and, with thy hand, thy faith irrevocable, that only Warwick’s daughter shall be thine,” she adds, pointedly.

The young man knows Lady Anne. “Yes, I accept her, for she well deserves it,” he says proudly. “And here, to pledge my vow, I give my hand.”

“Why *stay* we now?” asks King Louis, as the hands are shaken. He motions for a silver-haired courtier to come forward. “Those soldiers shall be levied, and thou, Lord Bourbon, our high admiral, shalt waft them over with our royal fleet!

“I *long* till Edward fall by war’s mischance, for mocking marriage with a dame of France!”

As the French lords begin preparation for an invasion, Lord Warwick, still burning with humiliation, muses angrily.

I came from Edward as ambassador, but I return his sworn and mortal foe!

Matter of marriage was the charge he gave me—but dreadful war shall answer his demand!

Had he none else to make a stale but me? Then none but I shall turn his jest to sorrow!

I was the chief that raised him to the crown, and I’ll be chief to bring him again down!

Not that I pity Henry’s misery—but seek revenge on Edward’s mockery!

In London, lords of King Edward’s court await his return to the throne room.

“Now tell me, brother Clarence, what think you of this new marriage with the Lady Grey?” says Richard, Duke of Gloucester. “Hath not our brother made a *worthy* choice?” he asks, with obvious sarcasm.

George mocks the king’s haste. “*Alas*, you know ’tis *far* from hence to France!—how could he wait till Warwick made return?”

“My lords, forbear this talk!” warns the new Duke of Somerset. “Here comes the king!”

“And his *well*-chosen bride,” mutters Richard.

George grumbles, “I’ve a mind to tell him plainly what I think.”

Under a flourish of cornets, King Edward IV and his queen arrive with their attendants. Several nobles welcome them warmly.

Edward, taking his seat upon the throne, notices George’s annoyance. “Now, brother of

Clarence, you that stand pensive, as if half malcontent, how like you our choice?"

"As well as *Lewis of France*, or the Earl of *Warwick*—who are so weak of courage and in judgement that they'll take no *offence at your abuse!*" says George.

Edward merely shrugs. "Suppose they *take* offence—without cause; they are but Lewis and Warwick. I am *Edward!*—*your* king and *Warwick's*—and must have my *will!*"

"And shall have your will, because our king," says Richard. "Yet *hasty* marriage seldom proveth well...."

"Say, brother Richard: are *you* offended too?" asks Edward.

"Not *I! No!*—God *forbid* that I should wish them severed whom *God* hath joined together!" he says—clearly disapproving. "Nay; and 'twere pity to sunder them that *yoke* so well together!"—a rude reference to the couple's frequent private times together.

Edward frowns. "Setting your *scorns* and your dislike aside, tell me some *reason* why the Lady Grey should not have become my wife and England's queen.

"And you, too, Somerset and Montague; speak freely what you think."

Says George, "Then this is *mine* opinion: that King Lewis becomes your *enemy* for mocking him about the marriage of the Lady Bona!"

Notes Richard, "And Warwick, doing what *you* gave in charge, is now *dishonoured* by this new marriage!"

Edward is calmly confident. "What if both Lewis and Warwick be *appeasèd* by such invention as I can devise?"

Lord Montague, Warwick's brother, shakes his head. "To have joined in alliance with France would more have strengthened this our commonwealth 'gainst foreign storms than any *home-bred* marriage."

Lord Hastings scoffs. "Why, knows not Montague that England is *safe in itself*, if *true* within itself?"

"But the safer when 'tis backed by France," says Montague.

"'Tis better *using* France than *trusting* France," says Hastings, who has become Edward's closest advisor. "Let us be backed by *God*, and by the *seas* which He hath given for fence impregnable—and with *their helps only* defend ourselves! In them and in *ourselves* our safety lies."

Says George scornfully, "For *this one speech* Lord Hastings well *deserves* to have the heiress of the Lord Hungerford." Edward has been quite generous in elevating the widow Elizabeth's relatives, making them titled nobles.

"Aye, *what of that?*" snaps Edward. "It was my *will* and *grant*—and for this once my will shall stand for law!" he adds, with petulant sarcasm of his own.

Says Richard calmly, "And yet methinks Your Grace hath not done well to give the *daughter* and heir of Lord *Scales* unto the brother of your loving bride. She better would have fitted me or Clarence; but for your *bride* you bury your *brotherhood*."

George concurs. "Or else you would not have bestowed the heiress of the Lord *Bonville* on your new wife's son—and left your brothers to go speed elsewhere!"

King Edward chuckles. "*Alas*, poor Clarence!—is it for a *wife* that thou art malcontent? I will provide thee!"

But George has been deeply offended. "In choosing for *yourself*, you showed *your* judgment—which being *shallow*, give me leave to play the broker in mine *own* behalf! And to that end, I surely have mind to *leave* you!"

King Edward waves him away. "Leave me or tarry, *Edward* will be *king*, and not be tied unto his brother's will."

Elizabeth is upset. "My lords, do me but *right* and you must all confess that, before it pleased his majesty to raise my state to title of a queen, I was not of *ignoble* descent!—and meaner than myself have had like fortune! But even as this title honours me and mine, so your *dislike*, to whom I would be pleasing, doth cloud my joys with danger and with sorrow!"

Edward pats her hand. "My love, forbear to fawn upon *their* frowns! What danger or what sorrow can befall thee, so long as *Edward* is thy constant friend?—and their true *sovereign*, whom they must *obey*!

"Aye, whom they *shall* obey—and *love thee*, too, unless they seek for hatred at my hands!—which if they do, yet will I keep *thee* safe, and they shall feel the vengeance of my *wrath*!"

Richard muses. *I hear, and say not much—but think the more.*

A worried-looking courier approaches the king and bows.

"Now, messenger, what letters or what news from France?" asks Edward.

"My sovereign liege, no letters—and few *words* but such as I, without your *special pardon*, dare not relate!"

Edward scoffs. "*Go to*; we pardon thee! Therefore, in brief tell me their words as near as thou canst express them. What answer makes King Lewis to our letters?"

"At my depart, these were his very words: 'Go tell false Edward, thy supposed king, that Louis of France is sending over masquers to revel it with him and his new bride.'"

The king is surprised. "Is Lewis so *brave*? Belike he thinks me *Henry*! But what said Lady Bona to my marriage?"

"These were her words, uttered with mad disdain: 'Tell him, in hope he'll prove a widower shortly, I'll wear the willow garland for his sake.'"

"I blame not her—she could say little less; *she* had the *wrong*. But what said Henry's queen? For I have heard that she was there in place...."

"'Tell him,' quoth she, 'my mourning weeds are done, and I am ready to put armour on.'"

King Edward nods. "Belike she minds to play the Amazon. But what said Warwick to these injuries?"

"He, more incensed against Your Majesty than all the rest, discharged me with these words: 'Tell him from me that he hath done me *wrong*, and therefore I'll *uncrown* him ere't be long.'"

"*Huh!* Durst the *traitor* breathe out so-proud words? Well, I will *arm* me, being thus forewarned! They shall *have* wars!—and *pay* for their presumption!"

"But say: is Warwick *friends* with Margaret?"

"Aye, gracious sovereign; they are so linked in friendship that young Prince Edward marries Warwick's daughter."

Says George angrily, "Belike the *younger*; *Clarence* will have the elder!" He has courted Lady Anne's lovely—and wealthy—sister, Isabella. "Now, brother *king*, farewell, and sit you fast—for I will hence to Warwick's other daughter, so that, though I lack a kingdom, yet in *marriage* I may not prove inferior to yourself!"

He calls to the courtiers, "You that love me and Warwick, follow me!" George leaves, and Lord Somerset is among those who go with him.

Not I! thinks Richard. *My thoughts aim at a further matter; I stay not for the love of Edward, but of the crown!*

The king is disturbed. *Clarence and Somerset both gone to Warwick!* The switching of others' allegiance is now likely. *Haste is needful in this desperate case!*

Yet am I armed against the worst can happen. Edward summons forth two lords. "Pembroke and Stafford, you in our behalf *go levy men*, and make to *prepare for war*! They are already, or quickly *will be, landed!*

"Myself *in person* will straight follow you!" The noblemen bow and hurry away.

"But, ere I go," says Edward, "Hastings and Montague, resolve my doubt. You twain, of all the rest, are near to Warwick by blood and by alliance; tell me if you love Warwick more than me! If it be so, then both depart to him—I rather wish you *foes* than *hollow* friends!"

"But if you intend to hold your true obedience, give me assurance, with some friendly vow, that I may never have you in suspect."

"So *God* help Montague as he proves *true!*" says the marquis.

"And Hastings as he favours *Edward's* cause!"

The king looks to Gloucester. “Now, brother Richard, will *you* stand by us?”
Richard sees Edward’s opponents as rivals. “*Aye*, in despite of all who shall withstand you.”
“*Well*; so then am I sure of *victory!*” says the king. “Now therefore let us *hence!*—and lose no hour till we meet Warwick with his foreign power!”

Chapter Seven Captives

Lord Oxford watches as French soldiers—enemies for a century, but now invading in alliance with some English nobles—complete their broad encampment on the plains of Warwickshire. After landing in the south, they have marched, by the thousands, all the way to central England. Horses, provisions, and more weapons have followed, unloaded from the ships also provided by King Louis.

Warwick is aware of the other earl’s mixed feelings—and his immediate concern. “Trust me, my lord, all hitherto goes well! The *common* people by numbers swarm to *us!*” He points to new arrivals. “But see where Somerset and *Clarence* come!

“Speak suddenly, my lords” he cautions the dukes. “Are we all *friends?*”

“Fear not *that*, my lord!” says George, shaking his hand warmly. He smiles as he joins the rebellious commander—the father of his betrothed.

“Then, gentle Clarence, welcome unto Warwick! And *welcome*, Somerset!

“I hold it cowardice to rest mistrustful where a noble heart hath pawned an open hand in sign of love, else might I think that Clarence, Edward’s *brother*, were but a feignèd friend to our proceeding. But *welcome*, sweet Clarence—my daughter shall be thine!”

Nearby, foot-soldiers sit whetting their blades as Warwick, eager to strike at Edward’s comfortable royal forces, surveys his own army, hastily transported and assembled here.

“And now what rests but that, in night’s coverture—thy brother being carelessly encamped, his soldiers lurking in the towns about, and attended by but a simple guard—we may surprise and take him at our pleasure!

“Our scouts have found the adventure very easy: as Ulysses and stout Diomed with sleight and manhood stole to Rhesus’ tents, and brought from thence the fatal Thracian steeds, so *we*, well covered with the night’s black mantle, at unawares may beat down Edward’s guard and seize himself!

“I say not *slaughter* him,” Warwick assures George, “for I intend but only to *surprise* him”—take him into custody.

Warwick addresses a small party: “You that will follow me to this attempt, *applaud* the name of Henry with your *leader!*”

They all join him enthusiastically in shouting “*Henry!*”

The cheering continues, but soon he waves for quiet. “Well, then; let’s on our way in *silent* sort!

“For Warwick and his friends, *God* and *Saint George!*” he cries to those following him in the excursion. Darkness soon hides his face, or it would show that his anger has not diminished.

Three foot-soldiers have been sent by a sergeant to guard King Edward’s tent at an army encampment; this one is near the town of Warwick.

“Come on, my masters, each man take his stand,” says the leader, warming his hands beside the fire. “The king by now has set himself down to sleep.”

“What, will he not to *bed?*” asks a young soldier.

“Why, no,” says the wizened corporal, “for he hath made a solemn vow never to lie and take his natural rest till Warwick or himself be *quite suppressèd.*” He shakes his head, smiling; zeal claimed by the pampered nobility amuses the scarred survivor of many battles.

The boy is uneasy. “Tomorrow, then, belike shall be *the day*, if Warwick be so near as men report...”

His companion, also a conscript, asks the others. “But say, I pray, what nobleman is that, who with the king resteth here in his tent?”

The corporal knows. “’Tis the Lord Hastings, the king’s closest friend.”

“Oh, is it so?” The soldier is puzzled. “But why commands the king that his chief followers”—army officers—“lodge in *towns* about him, while he *himself* keeps in the cold field?”

“’Tis the more *honour* because more *dangerous!*” suggests the younger lad.

“Aye. But give *me worshipful quietness*; I like it better than a dangerous honour!” says his friend. “If *Warwick* knew in what estate he sits, ’tis not to be doubted he would *waken* him!”

“Unless our *halberds* did shut off his passage!” growls the corporal, wagging his tall weapon.

The older youth laughs as they walk to take their positions. “Aye. Wherefore else guard we his royal tent,” he says, yawning, “but to defend his person from *night-foes?*”—bad dreams.

Just ahead of his advancing ranks of troops, Warwick stealthily leads several experienced soldiers through the darkness.

He crouches, points, and whispers, “This is his tent; and see where stand his guard. *Courage*, my masters! *Honour*, now or never! Follow me, and Edward shall be ours!”

They creep, silently, toward the tent.

The king’s corporal first spots movement in the dark. “Who goes there?”

“Stop or thou diest!” cries the youth beside him.

But the attackers call out boldly, “*Warwick! Warwick!*” and set upon the guards—who flee, shouting, “*Arm! Arm!*” as they are chased away.

Warwick’s leading ranks now march forward; the guard under his colors beats a drum roll, and the herald’s trumpet sounds a flourish. The general’s men light torches, as he and Lord Somerset approach the tent; emerging from within are two of their soldiers, lugging between them a cushioned wooden chair—on which sits the portly King Edward IV, just now awakening in his dressing gown.

“Who are they that fly there?” cries Somerset, as two men escape from the rear of the tent.

“Richard and Hastings,” Warwick tells him. “Let them go; here is the duke!”

“The *duke?*” says Edward indignantly. “Why, Warwick, when we parted, thou calledst me *king!*”

“Aye, but the case is *altered!* When you *disgraced* me in my embassy, I then *degraded* you from being king—and come now to create you Duke of York!”

He steps toward the chair, in which Edward is being restrained. “Alas! How should *you* govern any kingdom, that know not how to use *ambassadors?*—nor how to be contented with *one* wife!—nor how to use your brothers *brotherly*—nor how to study for the *people’s* welfare!” He adds, scornfully, “Nor how to shroud yourself from enemies!”

Edward spots George among the lords behind Warwick. “Yea, brother of *Clarence*, are *thou* here too? Nay, then I see that Edward needs must down,” he says, dejected.

But he straightens in the chair. “Yet, Warwick, in *despite* of all mischance—of thee *thyself* and *all* thy ’complices!—*Edward* will always bear himself as *king!*” He ignores a soldier’s muffled laugh. “Though Fortune’s malice overthrow my state, my *mind* exceeds the compass of her wheel!”

“Then *in his mind* be Edward England’s king,” says Warwick—removing the diadem. “But *Henry* now shall wear the English *crown*, and be true king in *deed*—thou, but the *shadow!*”

Warwick gazes down for a moment at the golden circle in his hands. “My Lord of Somerset, at my request, see that forthwith Duke Edward be conveyed unto my brother the Archbishop of York. When I have fought with Pembroke and his fellows,”—Edward’s troops here, “I’ll follow you, and *describe* to him what *answer* Lewis and the Lady Bona send!

“Now, for a while, farewell, good *Duke* of York!”

Edward is pulled from the chair. “What Fates impose, that men must needs abide,” he says. “It boots not to resist both *wind* and tide!” he sneers, as he is led away under guard.

Oxford regards the other noblemen. “What now remains for us to do, my lords, but *march to London* with our soldiers?”

Warwick nods. “*Aye*, that’s the *first* thing that we have to do—to *free* King Henry from imprisonment, and see him seated on the regal *throne!*”

At the royal palace in London, the queen hurries into her quarters; Elizabeth is pale, highly alarmed.

“Madam, what makes in you this sudden change?” asks a lethargic nobleman.

“Why, brother Rivers, are you yet to learn what late *misfortune* is befall’n *King Edward?*”

“What?” he asks, carelessly. “Loss of some pitched battle against Warwick?”

“*No*, but the loss of *his own royal person!*”

Lord Rivers’ eyes widen. “Then is my sovereign *slain?*”

“*Aye*, almost slain!—for he is taken *prisoner!*—either betrayed by falsehood of his guard, or by his foe surprised at unawares! And, as I further have to understand, is newly committed unto the Bishop of York—fell *Warwick’s* brother, and by that *our foe!*”

Rivers ponders. “These news, I must confess, are full of grief; yet, gracious madam, bear it as you may; Warwick may lose, who now hath won the day.”

“Till then fair *hope* must hinder life’s decay!

“And I’d rather wean me from despair—for love of Edward’s *offspring* in my womb!” She rests a hand on her middle. “*This* is it that makes me bridle passion, and bear with mildness my misfortune’s cross! *Aye*, *aye*, for this I *draw in* many a tear, and stop the rise of enfeebling *sighs*,”—thought to weaken the heart and harm an unborn infant, “lest with my sighs or tears I blast or drown King Edward’s fruit, true heir to the English crown!”

“But, madam, what of Warwick has then become?”

“I am informèd that he comes towards London, to set the crown once more on *Henry’s* head!

“*Guess thou the rest!* King *Edward’s* friends must *down!*”

“But to prevent the tyrant’s violence—for trust not him that hath *once* broken faith!—I’ll hence forthwith unto a *sanctuary*, to save at least the *heir* of Edward’s right! There shall I rest, secure from force and fraud.” She intends to leave immediately for the abbey in nearby Westminster.

“Come, therefore; let us go while we may fly! If Warwick *take* us, we are sure to die!”

Two noblemen have been waiting with several servants amid the shadowed green foliage under trees in the archbishop’s game preserve near Middleham Castle in Yorkshire.

Richard approaches them. “Now, my Lord Hastings and Sir William Stanley, leave off wondering why I drew you hither, into this chiefest thicket of the park!

“Thus stands the case: you know our king, my brother, is *prisoner* to the bishop here, at whose hands he hath good usage and great liberty, and—often but attended with weak guard—comes hunting this way to disport himself.

“I have advised him by secret means that if about this hour he make his way under the colour of his usual game, he shall here find his *friends*—with horse and men to *set him free* from this captivity!”—and protection, although Richard doesn’t mention that.

The other nobles nod agreement, but as they move into concealment among some tall bushes, they peer around warily for guards—or soldiers. They see none.

Before long a game warden, followed on foot by Edward, strides through the clearing just to the south. “This way, my lord,” he calls back, “for this way lies the game.”

“*Nay*, *this* way, man!” cries Edward, turning instead toward the woods. He points: “See where the huntsmen stand!”

He walks straight to Richard, grinning. “Now, brother of Gloucester, Lord Hastings, and the rest! Stand you thus close to steal the bishop’s *deer*?” he jests.

Richard frowns. “Brother, the time and case requireth *haste*! Your horse stands ready at the park-corner...”

Edward glances past him to their mounts. “But whither shall we then?”

Hastings replies. “To Lynn, my lord, and ship from thence to Flanders.”

“*Well guessed*, believe me,” says Richard, “for that *was* my meaning.” Without naming its primary passenger, he had asked Hastings to arrange for such a voyage.

Edward is pleased. “Stanley, I will requite thy forwardness!” he tells the knight genially.

Richard wants to be away from Warwick’s allies. “But wherefore *stay* we?—’tis no time to *talk*!”

The bishop’s man is watching them, fearfully.

“Huntsman, what say’st *thou*? Wilt thou go along?” asks Edward.

The man nods—if not happily. “Better do so than tarry and be hanged!”

“Come then, *away*; let’s ha’ no more ado!” says Richard, hurrying toward the waiting horses.

“Bishop, farewell!” says Edward, glancing back. “Shield thee from *Warwick’s frown*!”

King Henry VI smiles at the officer who has served as his chief keeper in the Tower of London. “Master Lieutenant, now that God, and friends, have shaken Edward from the regal seat, and turned my captive state to *liberty*—my fear to *hope*, my sorrows to *joys*—upon our release, what are thy due fees?”

Standing beside the king are Warwick and George, the Duke of Clarence, with Lords Oxford, Montague, and Somerset—who has brought along a boy.

The lieutenant bows to Henry. Typically, an inmate is expected, upon being freed, to pay the costs of his imprisonment. “Subjects may challenge nothing of their *sovereigns*; but if an humble prayer may prevail, then I crave *pardon* of Your Majesty.”

Henry laughs. “For *what*, lieutenant?—for using me *well*? Nay, be thou sure I’ll well *requite* thy kindness, for that it made my imprisonment a pleasure!”

He sighs, expecting to be reunited soon with the imperious Margaret. “Aye, such a pleasure as engagèd birds conceive, when after many moody thoughts, at last by notes of household *harmony* they quite forget their loss of liberty.

“But, Warwick, after God, *thou* set’st me free, and chiefly therefore I *thank* God and thee; He was the author, thou the instrument!

“Therefore, so that I may conquer Fortune’s spite by living *low*, where Fortune cannot hurt me, and so that the people of this blessèd land may not be punished by *my* thwarting stars: Warwick, although my head still wear the crown, I here *resign my government* to thee, for thou art fortunate in all thy deeds!”

The earl bows graciously. “Your Grace hath ever been famed for *virtue*—and now may seem as *wise* as virtuous, by espying and *avoiding* Fortune’s malice!—for few men rightly temper with the stars!

“Yet in this one thing let me blame Your Grace: for choosing *me* when *Clarence* is in place.”

But George, too, wants him to assume the administration of England. “No, Warwick, thou art *worthy* of the sway!—to whom the heavens in thy nativity awarded an olive branch *and* laurel crown, as likely to be blest in *peace* and *war*! And therefore I yield thee my free consent.”

The earl would demur. “And I choose *Clarence only* for Protector!” When Henry was an infant king, a Protector of the Realm served as his guardian—and *de facto* monarch.

King Henry moves between them. “Warwick and Clarence, give me both your hands! Now *join* your hands—and with your hands, your *hearts*—so that no dissension hinder government!

“I make you *both* protectors of this land, while I myself will lead a private life, and in *devotion* spend my latter days, to sin’s rebuke and my Creator’s praise.”

Warwick looks at the duke. “What answers Clarence to his sovereign’s will?”

“That he *consents*, if *Warwick* yield consent—for on thy fortune I repose myself.”

“Why then, though loath, yet must I be content,” says Warwick. “We’ll yoke together, like a double shadow to Henry’s body, and supply his place—I mean, in *bearing the weight* of government—while he enjoys the honour and his ease!

“Then, Clarence, now it is more than *needful* that forthwith Edward be pronounced a *traitor*, and all his lands and goods be confiscate!”

“What else?” says George, in full agreement. “And that *succession* be determinèd.”

“*Aye*,” says Warwick. “Therein Clarence shall not lack his part!”

The benign Henry, no longer feeling responsible for a multitude of lives, is relieved; and he misses his home. “But *with* the first of all your chief affairs, let me entreat—for I *command* no longer—that Margaret your queen and my son Edward be sent for, to return from France with speed! For, till I see them *here*, by doubtful fear my joy of liberty is half eclipsed!”

“It shall be done, my sovereign, with all speed,” George assures him.

King Henry has been watching the boy who has come to witness his release, and who has observed with intelligent attentiveness. “My Lord of Somerset, what youth is that, of whom you seem to have so tender care?”

“My liege, it is young *Henry*, Earl of *Richmond*.”

The devout and spiritual sovereign regards the child closely—and perceives special qualities in him. “Come hither, England’s hope.”

Smiling kindly, he places a hand gently on the boy’s shoulder. “If secret powers suggest but truth to my divining thoughts, this pretty lad will prove our country’s bliss! His looks are full of peaceful majesty: his head by Nature framed to wear a crown, his hand to wield a sceptre, and himself likely in time to bless a regal throne.”

Henry Tudor is thirteen; eyes glistening, he accepts the hopeful divination in splendid silence.

“Make much of him, my lords,” King Henry tells English nobles, “for this is he who must help you more than you are hurt by me.”

Warwick now turns as a knight arrives—in a great hurry. “What *news*, my friend?”

“That Edward is *escapèd from your brother!*—and fled, as he hears since, to *Burgundy!*”—in central France; the province’s powerful duke is married to Edward’s sister.

“*Unsavoury news!*” cries Warwick. “But how made he escape?”

“He was conveyed by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the lord Hastings, who attended him in secret ambush at the forest’s side, and from the bishop’s huntsman rescued him; for hunting was his daily exercise.”

Warwick shakes his head. “My brother was too careless of his charge!

“But let us hence, my sovereign, to provide a salve for any sore that may betide.”

He leads the king and the noble procession from the Tower, heading for the castle.

As they watch the others go, Somerset tells Oxford, quietly, “My lord, I like not this flight of Edward’s—for doubtless Burgundy will yield him help, and we shall have more *wars* before ’t be long!

“As Henry’s presaging prophecy here did *glad* my heart with hope for this young Richmond, so doth my heart *misgive* me now! In these conflicts what may befall him?—to his harm and *ours!* Therefore, Lord Oxford, to prevent the worst, forthwith we’ll send him hence to Brittany,”—English-held territory just across the channel, “till storms of civil enmity be past.”

Oxford replies in a hushed voice: “*Aye*; for if Edward repossess the crown, ’tis like that Richmond with the rest shall down!”

Somerset agrees. “It shall be so; he shall to Brittany.

“Come, therefore, let’s about it *speedily!*”

Chapter Eight Edward's Right

Riding a gray stallion, Edward is very pleased, having led his new forces, including mercenaries, right to the main entrance to city of York. "Now, brother Richard, Lord Hastings, and the rest, yet thus far Fortune maketh us amends, and says that once more I shall interchange my waned state for Henry's regal crown!

"Well have we passed and now *re-passèd* the seas, and brought desired help from Burgundy!

"What then remains, we being thus arrivèd from Ravenspurgh haven before the gates of York," he asks, "but that we enter us into our dukedom?"

Richard, watching as their soldiers come to a halt at the entrance ahead, frowns. "The gate's made fast, brother! I like this not!—for many men that stumble at the *threshold* are well foretold that *danger* lurks within!"

Edward dismounts. "*Tsk*, man, *bodements* must not now affright us! By fair means or foul we must *enter in*, for hither will our *friends* repair to us."

"My liege, I'll knock once more to summon them," says Hastings—and he pounds with the haft of his dagger against the huge doors.

With other chief officials of his town beside him, the flustered Mayor of York comes to the parapet and calls down. "My lords, we were forewarnèd of your coming, and shut the gates for safety of ourselves—for now we owe allegiance unto *Henry*."

Edward stares up at the graybeard. "But, Master Mayor, even if Henry be your *king*, yet *Edward* at the least is *Duke of York*!"

The mayor nods, abashed. "True, my good lord; I know you for no less."

"Why then I challenge nothing but my dukedom, as being well content with that alone," claims Edward.

But when the fox hath once got his nose in, he'll soon find means to make the body follow! thinks Richard.

"Well, Master Mayor, why stand you in a doubt?" asks Hastings calmly. "Open the gates; we are King Henry's *friends*."

"Say you so?" The mayor blinks, considering. He nods again. "Aye, then the gates shall be opened." He motions for the others to follow him down.

"A *wise, stout* captain—and *soon persuaded!*" sniffs Richard.

"The good old man would fain that all *were* well," says Lord Hastings, "so 'twere not long of him. But I doubt not that we, being *entered*, shall soon persuade both him and *all* his brothers unto reason."

The oaken doors, creaking loudly, swing apart, and the mayor emerges with two aldermen. They bow to the duke.

"Now, Master Mayor," says Edward, "these gates must not be shut but in the night, or in a time of war." He sees the officials' apprehension. "What? Fear not, man, but yield me up the keys! For Edward will *defend* the town—and thee, and all those friends that deign to follow me!" he says, taking the ring of iron keys, and handing them to a captain.

They hear drums, and watch as a large troop of soldiers comes marching toward the city from the east.

Richard recognizes their commander's banner. "Brother, this is Sir John Montgomery, our trusty friend, unless I be deceived."

"Welcome, Sir John!" calls Edward, as the knight approaches. "But why come you in *arms*?"

Montgomery bows. "To help *King Edward* in his time of storm!—as *every* loyal subject ought to do!"

Edward is cautious; he decides to mimic Henry. "Thanks, good Montgomery. But we now forget our title to the crown, and only claim our dukedom, till *God* please to send the rest."

Sir John stares. "Then fare you well, for I will hence again. I came to serve a *king*, and not a duke!" He motions to the soldiers guarding his colors. "Drummer, strike up, and let us march away." The drum begins to pound out a cadence.

"Nay, *stay*, Sir John, a while," says Edward quickly, "and we'll debate by what *safe* means the crown may be recovered...."

Montgomery motions to silence the drum, but he frowns. "What?—talk you of *debating*?"

"In few words: if you'll not *here proclaim yourself our king*, I'll leave you to your fortune and be gone, keeping back those that come to succor you!

"Why shall *we* fight, if *you* pretend to no title?"

Richard's chief hope lies in continuing the conflict among others who would wear the crown. "Why, Brother!—wherefore stand you on *fine points*?" he asks.

"When we grow *stronger*, then we'll make our claim," Edward replies. "Till then, 'tis wisdom to conceal our meaning."

"*Away* with scrupulous wit!" cries Lord Hastings. "Now *arms* must rule!"

"And *fearless* minds climb soonest unto *crowns*," says Richard. "Brother, *we* will proclaim you out of hand! The bruit thereof will bring you *many* friends!"

Edward yields: "Then be it as you will—for 'tis my *right*, and Henry but *usurps* the diadem!"

Montgomery is pleased. "*Aye!*—*now* my sovereign speaketh like *himself*! And now will I be Edward's champion!"

Hastings calls to Edward's guard troops. "*Sound*, trumpet! Edward shall be here proclaimed! Come, fellow *soldier*, make thou *proclamation*!"

The trumpeter plays a loud flourish, and a herald steps forth to call out: "*Edward the Fourth*, by the grace of God, *King of England and France*, and lord of *Ireland*!"

"And whosoe'er *gainsays* King Edward's right," cries Montgomery, "by this I challenge him to single fight!" He throws down a gauntlet.

The soldiers cry out together, "*Long live Edward the Fourth*!"

Edward smiles and raises his hands. "Thanks, brave Montgomery!—and thanks unto you *all*! If Fortune serve me, I'll *requite* this kindness!

"Now, for this night let's harbour here in York; and when the morning sun shall raise his chariot above the border of this horizon, we'll *forward* towards Warwick and his mates!—for well I wot that *Henry* is no soldier! Ah, froward *Clarence*!—how evilly it beseems thee to *flatter* Henry, and forsake thy *brother*! Yet, as we may, we'll *meet* both thee and Warwick!

"Come on, brave soldiers! Doubt not of the day!—and, that once gotten, doubt not of large *pay*!"

Warwick has summoned to the palace the chief noblemen loyal to King Henry's rule. "What counsel, lords? *Edward* hath passed in safety through the narrow seas from Burgundy, with hasty Germans and blunt Hollanders, and with his troops doth *march amain to London*!—and many giddy people *flock* to him!"

"Let's levy men, and beat him back again," suggests Henry calmly.

George nods sagely. "A little fire which, being suffered, *rivers* cannot quench is quickly *trodden* out."

Their general's face is grim; he knows that repulsing the invaders will be neither simple nor quick. "In Warwickshire I have *true*-hearted friends—not mutinous in peace, yet *bold in war*!—those will I *muster up*!

"And *thou*, son Clarence,"—George is now his son-in-law, "shalt stir up, in Suffolk, Norfolk and Kent, the knights and gentlemen to *come with thee*!

"*Thou*, brother Montague, in Buckingham, Northampton and Leicestershire shalt find men *well* inclinèd to hear what thou command'st; and thou, brave *Oxford*, in Oxfordshire wondrous well belovèd, shalt muster up *thy* friends!"

He regards Henry. "My sovereign, like his island girt-in with the ocean, or modest Dian

circled with her nymphs, shall rest with the loving citizens in London till we come to him.

“Fair lords, *take leave*, and stand not to reply!” He starts toward the doors of the old chamber. “*Farewell*, my sovereign!”

Henry is content. “Fare well, my Hector, and my Troy’s true hope!”

George bows. “In sign of truth, I kiss Your Highness’ hand.”

“Well-minded Clarence, be thou fortunate,” says Henry.

Montague bows. “Comfort, my lord; and so I take my leave.”

“And thus I seal my truth, and bid adieu,” says Oxford, with a bow.

Henry smiles. “Sweet Oxford, and my loving Montague, and *all* at once, once more a happy farewell!”

“Farewell, sweet lords!” cries Warwick. “Let’s meet at Coventry!”

Soon, all have hurried away but the increasingly feeble king and an aging duke.

“Here at the palace I will rest awhile,” says Henry, drawing a chair from the council table and taking a seat. “Cousin of Exeter, what think Your Lordship? Methinks the army that Edward hath in field should not be able to counter mine.”

Exeter sits down near him. “The concern is that he will seduce the *rest*”—appeal to discontented residents.

“That’s not my fear,” says Henry comfortably. “My *meed*”—deserving—“hath got me *fame!* I have not stopped mine ears to their demands, nor passed off their suits with slow delays. My pity hath been balm to heal their wounds; my mildness hath allayed their swelling griefs, my mercy dried their flowing-water tears. I have not been desirous of their wealth, nor much oppressed them with great subsidies”—taxes. “Nor forward in *revenge*,” he adds, “though they much *erred!*”

“Then why should they love Edward more than me? No, Exeter, those graces *call* for grace; and when the lion fawns upon the lamb, the lamb will never cease to follow him.”

From the corridor beyond come palace guards’ frantic calls to summon help: “*Lancaster! A Lancaster!*”

“*Hark, hark*, my lord!—what shouts are these?” asks Exeter, as they rise in alarm.

The doors fly open and soldiers burst in, followed by Edward. “Seize on the shame-faced Henry!—bear him hence!” he cries. “And once again proclaim us *King of England!*”

“You are the fount that makes *small brooks* to flow,” he tells Henry contemptuously. “Now *stops* thy spring!—my *sea* shall suck them dry, and swell so much the *higher* by their ebb!”

“Hence with him to the Tower!” he orders the soldiers. “Let him not speak.”

Poor Henry is dragged away.

King Edward turns to Richard and Hastings, who have accompanied him while his troops seized the palace. “And, lords, toward Coventry bend we our course, where peremptory Warwick now remains!

“The sun shines hot; but if we use *delay*, cold, biting *winter* mars our hoped-for hay!”

Richard strides to the doors. “*Away betimes*, before his forces join!—and take the great-grown traitor unawares!

“Brave warriors, march *amain* towards *Coventry!*” he cries.

Where is the rider that came from valiant Oxford?” demands Warwick, looking around. He sees the man. “How far hence is thy lord, mine honest fellow?”

“By now at Dunsmore, marching hitherward,” says the messenger, joining the general and the mayor atop the high walls protecting the city of Coventry, one hundred miles northwest of London. They are eagerly awaiting allies.

“How far off is our brother Montague?” he calls down behind them. “Where is the post that came from *Montague?*”

A second rider rushes up the stone steps. “By now at Daintry,” he reports, “with a puissant troop!”—a powerful contingent of soldiers.

Warwick paces along the bulwark, resuming the fretful, impatient wait. He sees, below, a gentleman on horseback approach, then enter through the gate. Soon Sir John reaches him and bows.

“Say, Somerville: what sends my loving son-in-law?—and, by thy guess, how nigh is Clarence *now*?”

“At Southam I did leave him with his forces, and do expect him here some two hours hence!”

Warwick moves eagerly to the parapet’s edge. “Then Clarence is *at hand*—I hear his drum!”

“It is not *his*, my lord,” Somerville tells him, peering toward the approaching troops, away to the southwest. He points southeast: “*There* Southam lies; the drum Your Honour hears marcheth from Warwick.”

The general stares. “Who should *that* be? Belike, unlooked-for friends....”

“They are at hand, and you shall quickly know,” says Somerville.

They all watch the advancing army.

“Go, trumpet, to the walls, and sound a *parle!*” orders King Edward IV, as his leading troops halt just outside the barred main gate of Coventry; those behind continue their swift northward march to begin assembling here.

Richard of Gloucester glances up. “See how the surly Warwick *mans the wall!*”

Above, that general is astonished—and appalled. *Oh, unbidden spite! Is sportful Edward come? Where slept our scouts, or how are they seduced, that we could hear no news of his return?*

Edward calls up to him. “Now, Warwick, wilt thou ope the city gates, speak gentle words, and humbly bend thy knee?”

“Call Edward *king*, and at his hands *beg mercy*, and he shall pardon thee these outrages!”

Warwick scoffs. “*Nay!* Rather wilt *thou* draw thy forces *hence!*—*confess* who set thee up and plucked thee down, call Warwick *patron*—and be *penitent!*”

“Then, thou shalt still remain the *Duke of York*,” he says disdainfully.

Richard pretends to be puzzled. “I thought he would have said ‘*king*’ at the last—or did he make a jest against his will?”

Warwick sneers. “Is not a *dukedom*, sir, a goodly *gift*?”

“*Aye*, by my faith—for a poor *earl* to give!” retorts Richard. “I’ll do thee *service* for so good a gift!” he vows, with deadly sarcasm.

“’Twas *I* that gave the *kingdom* to thy brother!” calls Warwick defiantly.

Edward glares. “Why then ’tis *mine*, if but by Warwick’s gift!”

Warwick gibes: “Thou art no *Atlas!*—and for so great a weight, *weakling*, Warwick *takes* his gift again! *Henry* is my king, Warwick *his* subject.”

Says Edward, gravely, “But *Warwick’s* king is Edward’s *prisoner!* And, gallant Warwick, do but answer *this*: what is the body when the *head is off*?”

Richard laughs: “Alas, of *that* Warwick had not made *forecast!*—whiles he thought to steal a single *ten*, a *king* was slyly fingered from the deck!” He tells the earl, “You left poor Henry at the *bishop’s palace*—but, ten to one, you’ll *meet* him in the *Tower!*”

Edward nods. “’Tis even so. Yet you are *Warwick* still....” he says, again offering the earl a chance to surrender.

Richard taunts: “Come, Warwick, accept the *time!* Kneel down, *kneel down!*” He watches impatiently. “*Nay, when?* Strike now, or else the iron cools!”

Warwick replies, red-faced. “I had rather *chop this hand off* at a blow, and with the other *fling it at thy face*, than bear so low a *sail* as to strike it to *thee!*”

Now King Edward is angry. “Sail how thou canst, have wind and tide thy friends, *this* hand, fast wound about thy coal-black *hair*, shall whiles thy head is *newly cut off* and warm write in the dust this sentence *with thy blood*: ‘*Wind-changing* Warwick now can *change no more!*’”

But Warwick is smiling; a new phalanx of armed men is approaching. He points: “Oh,

cheerful colours! *See where Oxford comes!*"

As that earl, John de Vere, begins leading his troops into the city he cries, "Oxford, *Oxford*, for *Lancaster!*"

"The gates are *open!*" hisses Richard to Edward. "*Let us enter too!*"

But his brother refuses to be hasty. "So, *other* foes may set upon our *backs!*" His battalions are still streaming forward behind them, but he knows that more Lancastrian forces are also near, coming to join Lord Warwick.

"Stand we in *good array*," he urges his commanders, "for they no doubt will issue out again and bid us battle! If not, the city being but of small defence we'll quickly rout the traitors in the same."

Inside the walls, Warwick is elated. "Oh, *welcome*, Oxford!—for we *want thy help!*"

Even as they talk, Warwick's brother Lord Montague arrives on horseback, with drum and colors marching at the head of his troops.

"*Montague*, Montague, for *Lancaster!*" cries the marquis, as he and his soldiers enter the city.

Shouts Richard, "Thou and thy brother *both* shall buy this *treason* even with the dearest *blood* your bodies bear!"

King Edward, though, is unperturbed. "The harder *matched*, the greater *victory!* My mind presageth happy gain and conquest!"

The match grows harder: "Somerset, *Somerset for Lancaster!*" cry that duke's men, as they, too, march into the city stronghold.

Richard warns the newcomer: "Two of thy name, both Dukes of Somerset, have paid their *lives* unto the House of York—and *thou* shalt be the *third* if *this* sword hold!"

Both sides watch intently now, as a major new power arrives from the south.

"And *lo*, where George of *Clarence* sweeps along!" cries Warwick, jubilating, "with force enough to bid his brother *battle!*—and with whom an upright zeal for *right* prevails more than the nature of a brother's love!"

"Come, Clarence, *come!*—thou wilt, if *Warwick* call!"

When he arrives just outside the city gate, George looks up, bows, and sweeps off his hat. "My father-in-law of Warwick, know you what *this* means?" he asks, pulling a red rose from the band. "Look here! I throw my *infamy* at thee!" The sun-wilted flower falls to the ground.

"I will not rinate the house of *my father*—who gave his *blood* to lime the stones together!—to set up *Lancaster!* Why, think thou, Warwick, that Clarence is so harsh, so blunt—*so unnatural!*—as to bend the fatal instruments of war against his *brother* and his lawful *king?*"

"Perhaps thou wilt object, over my holy oath," he says, replacing his hat. "To *keep* that oath were more impiety than *Jephthah's* when he sacrificed his daughter!"

"I am so *sorry* for my *trespass* made that, to deserve well at my brother's hands, I here proclaim myself *thy mortal foe*, with resolution wheresoe'er I meet thee!—as I *will* meet thee, if thou stir abroad!—to plague thee for thy foul *misleading* of me!"

"And so, proud-hearted Warwick, I *defy* thee!—and to my brother turn my blushing cheeks.

"*Pardon* me, Edward! I will make *amends!*"

"And *Richard*, do not frown upon my faults, for I will henceforth be no more unconstant."

Edward beams. "Now *welcome more*, and ten *times* more beloved than if thou never hadst deserved our hate!"

"Welcome, good Clarence," says Richard. "This is... brother-like."

Warwick is incensed. "Oh, *surpassing* 'traitor!'—*perjured* and *unjust!*"

King Edward—now heading two mighty Yorkist forces, while the Lancastrian pretender to the throne is his prisoner in the Tower of London—regards the foe boldly.

"*What*, Warwick? Wilt thou leave the town and *fight?*—or shall we *beat down the stones* about thine *ears!*"

Warwick shrugs demurral. "Alas, I am not to be copèd here in *defence!*"

"I will immediately away towards *Barnet!*—and bid thee *battle*, Edward, if thou *darest!*"

A tedious siege would hardly appeal to the monarch. “Yes, Warwick, Edward dares!—and leads the way!

“Lords, to the field!

“Saint George and victory!”

Chapter Nine Victory

A cold, dim morning looms over the huge armies. Stiff with strain, but achingly alert after a long night of deep private fears and shallow public assurances, men with weapons creep toward each other. In the eerie silence of thick fog on the shadowless fields of Barnet, they are bound for brutal combat.

The broad spectacle of this hand-to-hand clash of thousands can be seen by no one: though many excursions of private soldiers meet, most of them are unsure whose men they have encountered, even as their arrows fly and swords slash through the louring gloom. Stumbling over rough turf among fallen bodies, the fighters can hear only muffled alarums; often, the heralds’ distant horns are indistinguishable—as are the agonized cries and hopeless pleas of the wounded, crippled and dying.

At one dreary spot on the field of battle, two noblemen, among the first to have rushed forward from each side, have engaged in a long and strenuous fight. Richard stands, still gasping, beside a bloody body. *So, lie thou there! Die thou, and die our fear!—for Warwick was the menace that worried us all!*

He peers around, exultant. *Now, Montague, sit fast!—I seek for thee, so that Warwick’s bones may keep thine company!* He stalks away, searching in the heavy mist.

After a moment, Warwick’s eyelids twitch briefly, then open. Blinking, he wipes blood from his face; dizzy; groaning in pain, he struggles to sit up. “Ah, who is nigh?” he manages to utter weakly. “Come to me, friend or foe, and tell me who is victor—York or Warwick.”

Why ask I that? he wonders wryly, looking down at the deep, oozing wounds. My mangled body knows; my blood, my want of strength, my sick heart show that I must yield my body to the earth—and, by my fall, the conquest to my foe!

Thus to the ax’s edge yields the cedar whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle!—under whose shade the rampant lion slept!—whose top branch overpeered Jove’s spreading tree, and kept low shrubs from winter’s powerful wind!

These eyes, that now are dimmed with death’s black veil, have been as piercing as the mid-day sun, to search the secret treasons of the world! The wrinkles in my brow, now filled with blood, were likened oft to kingly sepulchres!—for who lived as king, but I could dig his grave?

And who durst rise, when Warwick bent his brow?

Lo, now, my glory’s smeared with dust and blood! My parks, my walks, the manors that I had even now forsake me!—and of all my lands, nothing is left me but my body’s length.

Why, what is pomp?—rule, reign?—but earth and dust! And, live we how we can, yet die we must.

Lords Oxford and Somerset, both of them walking warily with swords held at the ready, move toward him. They find the earl just as he eases himself back to the ground.

Somerset kneels beside him, gently lifting his injured head. “Ah, Warwick, Warwick!—wert thou as we are, we might recover all our loss again! The queen hath brought from France a puissant power!—even now we heard the news!” He can hear fighting in every direction. “Oh, could’st thou flee!”

Warwick, now unable to see, manages to frown. “Why, then I would not flee.” He thinks of his brother. “Ah, Montague, if thou be there, sweet brother, take my hand, and with thy lips keep in my soul awhile.

“Thou lovest me *not*,” he chides, with a groan, “for, Brother, if thou didst, thy *tears* would wash this cold, congealèd blood that glues my lips, and will not let me speak.” He shivers. “Come quickly, Montague, or I am dead....”

“Oh, Warwick,” moans Somerset, “Montague hath breathed his last!—and to the latest gasp *cried out* for Warwick, and said, ‘Commend me to my valiant brother!’ And *more* he would have said—but the rest which he spoke sounded like a murmur in a *vault*, that might not be distinguished. But the last I *well* might hear, delivered with a groan: ‘*O Warwick, farewell!*’”

The fallen earl smiles. “Sweet rest to his soul!”

“Fly, lords, and save yourselves. For Warwick bids you all farewell,” he whispers, “to meet in heaven....”

They watch as he dies.

“Away, *away*, to meet the queen’s great power!” says Oxford. Each grasps an arm, and they bear away the corpse.

King Edward IV has heard his brothers’ reports. “Thus far our fortune keeps an upward course, and we are graced with wreaths of *victory!*”

“But, in the midst of this bright-shining day, I spy a black, suspicious, *threatening cloud* that will encounter with our glorious sun ere it attain its easeful western bed. I mean, my lords, those powers that the *queen* hath raised in Gallia have arrivèd on our coast, and, as we hear, march on to fight with us.”

“A little gale will soon disperse that cloud,” says George confidently, “and blow it to the source from whence it came. The very *beams* will dry *those* vapours up; for not every cloud engenders a storm.”

But Richard speaks urgently. “The queen is valued as *thirty thousand strong!*—and *Somerset*, with *Oxford*, has fled to her! If she have time to breathe, be well assured her faction will be *fully as strong as ours!*”

Edward nods. “We are advised by our loving friends that they do hold their course toward Tewksbury. Having now the best at Barnet field, we will thither straight! For *willingness* rises with *way*—and as we march, our strength will be augmented in every county!”

“Strike up the drum! Cry, ‘*Courage!*’—and *away!*”

As her newly combined English and foreign forces prepare for battle near Tewkesbury, Queen Margaret, with Prince Edward at her side, stands before King Henry’s disheartened commanders. “Great lords, *wise* men ne’er sit and wail their loss, but cheerly seek how to *redress* their harms!”

“What though the mast be now blown overboard, the cable broke, the holding-anchor lost, and half our sailors swallowèd in the flood? Yet *lives* our *pilot* still!”

Still, she scowls, thinking of her mild husband. “Is’t *meet* that he should *leave the helm*, and like a fearful lad with tearful eyes add *water* to the *sea*, and give more strength to that which hath *too much?*—whiles during his moaning the ship, which *industry* and *courage* might have saved, *splits on the rock!*”

“Oh, what a *shame!*—*oh*, what a *fault* were *this!*”

The noblemen concur—in glum silence: absence of the king, weak as he may be, hardly bolsters enthusiasm for the royal cause.

Margaret continues. “Say Warwick was our *anchor*—what of that? And Montague our *topmost*—what of *him?* Our slaughtered friends the *tackle*—what of *those?* Why, is not *Oxford* here *another* anchor? And *Somerset* another goodly *mast?*—these friends from *France* our shrouds and tacklings?”

She puts a hand on her son’s shoulder. “And why not *Ned and I*, though unskillèd, for once allowed a skilful *pilot’s* charge?”

“*We* will not go from the helm to sit and weep,” she says angrily, “but *keep our course*,

though the rough wind say *no*, amid shelves and rocks that threaten us with *wreck!* As good to *chide* the waves as speak them *fair!*” Some of the listening men cross themselves; one does not taunt such powers.

“And what is *Edward* but *ruthless sea?* What *Clarence* but a *quicksand* of *deceit?* And *Richard* but a *ragged, fatal rock?* The enemies to our poor bark say, of all those: ‘You can *swim*; *alas*, ’tis but *awhile!*—*tread on the sand*; why, there you quickly *sink!*—*bestride the rock*; the tide will *wash you off!*—or else you’ll *famish!* That’s a *threefold death!*”

She sees frowns. “Thus speak I, lords, to let you understand, in case some one of you would fly from us, that there’s no more *mercy* hoped for from those *brothers* than from *ruthless waves*, *sands* and *rocks!*”

“Why, *courage* then! What cannot be avoided ’twere *childish weakness* to lament or fear!”

The loyal noblemen glance at each other uneasily; how much more of her dour “encouragement” must they endure?

The young prince pipes up: “Methinks if a *coward* heard her speak these words, a woman of this *valiant* spirit should infuse his breast with magnanimity!—and make him, *naked*, foil a man who is *armed!*”

“I speak this not as doubting any *here*, for did I but *suspect* a man fearful, he should have leave to go away betimes, lest in our need he might *infect another*, and make him of like spirit to himself.

“If any such *be* here—as God forbid!—let him depart before we *need* his help!” cries the boy.

Lord Oxford, seeing that the officers are indeed weighing the youth’s challenge, frowns. He steps forward and turns to face them. “*Women* and *children* of such high a *courage!*—and *warriors faint?* Why, ’twere perpetual *shame!*”

“O brave young prince!—thy famous *grandfather* doth live again in *thee!* Long mayst thou live to bear his image—and *renew his glories!*”

The invocation of King Henry V inspires Lord Somerset. “And he that will not *fight* for such a hope, *go home to bed!*—and like the owl, if he arise by *day*, be wondered at and *mocked!*”

“Thanks, gentle Somerset,” says Margaret. “Sweet Oxford, thanks!”

“And take *his* thanks who as yet hath nothing else!” adds Edward, erstwhile Prince of Wales.

A knight who has just met with their scouts approaches and bows. “*Prepare* you, lords!—for Edward is *at hand, ready to fight!* Therefore be resolute!”

Oxford nods grimly. “I thought no less. It is his policy to haste thus fast, to find us unprovided.”

“But he’s *deceived,*” says Somerset. “We are in readiness!”

Margaret beams. “This cheers my heart, to see your forwardness!”

“Here pitch our battle!”—entrench the army, cries Oxford. “Hence we will not budge!”

Through the fog they can hear, sounding faintly from beyond on the plain, a trumpet’s flourish, then the dull pounding of drums, as the legions of King Edward and his brothers march toward them.

The prince points to the enemy’s forward lines, emerging as shadowy, ominous shapes in the mist—and fast advancing. “Brave followers, yonder stands the thorny *wood*, which, by the heavens’ assistance and your strength, must *by the roots* be *hewn up* yet ere night!

“I need not add more fuel to your fire, for well I wot ye *blaze* to burn them out!

“Give signal to the fight,” he cries, “*and to it, lords!*”

But as the noblemen turn to go, Margaret speaks again. “Lords, knights, and gentlemen, what I should *say* my tears *gainsay*; for with every word I speak, as ye see, I drink the water of mine eyes!

“Therefore, no more but this: Henry, your sovereign, is *prisoner* to the foe!—his state *usurped*, his realm a *slaughter-house*, his subjects *slain*, his statutes *cancelled*, and his treasure *spent!*”

“And yonder is the wolf that *makes this spoil!*” she tells the stunned and crestfallen

commanders.

“You fight in *justice!*” she insists. “Then, in God’s name, lords, be *valiant*, and give signal to the fight!”

Just then an alarum does blare out—Edward’s—and suddenly they find themselves beset by a swarm of enemy troops.

Her royal party must retreat in haste, leaving behind a dozen dead.

Pale afternoon sunlight has vanquished most of the fog; dark, carrion birds and vermin feed among the horrid remains lying scattered about the cold, damp fields. It will take weeks for prisoners to bury all of the dead in mass graves.

King Edward declares the fighting finished: “Now here a *period* to tumultuous broils!”

He motions to the soldiers bringing two captives. “Away with Oxford to Hames Castle straight; as for Somerset, off with his guilty head! *Go*, bear them hence—I will not hear them speak.”

“For my part, I’ll not trouble thee with words,” mutters Oxford as he is led away.

“Nor I, but stoop with patience to my fortune,” says Somerset—his last words.

Queen Margaret, under guard, watches tearfully as they go. “So part we sadly in *this* troublous world, to meet with joy in sweet Jerusalem.”

The king asks Richard, “Is proclamation made that who finds Edward shall have a high reward?—and *he* his life.”

“It is,” says Richard, “and *lo*, where youthful Edward comes!” A soldier drags the scowling prince, recently wedded to Warwick’s daughter Anne, toward them.

“Bring forth the gallant; let us hear him speak!” says the king. He glares at the boy. “What! Can so *young* a thorn begin to *prick*?”

“Edward, what satisfaction canst thou offer for *bearing arms*, for *stirring up* my subjects, and all the *trouble* thou hast turned me to?”

“Speak like a *subject*, proud, ambitious York!” demands Prince Edward. “Suppose that I am now my *father’s* mouth: *kneel* thou when I stand, whilst I propose the selfsame words to thee, which—*traitor!*—thou wouldst have *me* answer to! *And resign thy chair!*”

Margaret listens sadly. “*Ah*, that thy *father* had been so resolvèd!”

Richard gibes: “And that *you* might ever have worn a *petticoat*, and ne’er have stol’n the breeches from Lancaster!”

“Let Aesop fable in a winter’s night,” the prince tells the king. “His *currish* riddles sort not with this place!”

Mutters Richard, “By heaven, brat, I’ll plague ye for that word!”

“*Aye*, thou wast *born* to be a plague to men!” Margaret tells him.

Richard orders her guards, “For God’s sake, take *away* this captive *scold!*”

The prince sneers. “Nay, rather take away this scolding *crookback!*”

“*Peace*, wilful boy, or I will charm your tongue!” warns the king.

“Untutored lad, thou art too malapert!” says George.

“I know *my* duty!” shouts the prince disdainfully. “You are *all undutiful!* Lascivious Edward, and thou, perjured George, and thou *mis-shapen Dick!* I tell ye all I am your *better*, *traitors* as ye are! And thou *usurp’st* my father’s right, and *mine!*”

Cries King Edward, stabbing him with a dagger as his mother watches, “Take *that*, thou likeness of *this* railer here!”

“*Sprawl’st* thou?” says Richard, watching the lad writhe on the ground. “Take *that*, to end thy agony!” He plunges his knife into the prince’s chest, killing him.

“And *there’s* for twitting me with *perjury!*” cries George, stabbing the body.

Margaret, staggered by the sight, reels. “*Oh, kill me too!*” she wails.

Richard starts for her with his bloody blade. “Marry, and *shall!*”

“*Hold*, Richard, *hold!*” cries Edward, staring down at the body, “for we have done *too much!*”

But Richard is seething. “Why should she live to fill the world with words?” Edward sees her faint and fall. “What, doth she *swoon*?” He motions his servants forward. “Use means for her recovery,” he tells them.

As the others cluster around the fallen queen, and servants fan her face and rub her hands, Richard speaks quietly to George. “Clarence, excuse me to the king my brother. I’ll hence to London on a serious matter; ere ye come there, be sure you’ll hear some news!”

“What?” asks Clarence, surprised and puzzled. “*What?*”

Richard strides away. “The Tower, the *Tower!*”

Margaret stares at the body. “O Ned, sweet *Ned!* Speak to thy mother, boy! Canst thou not speak?”

“Oh, *traitors! Murderers!*”

“They that stabbèd *Caesar* shed *no blood at all*, did not *offend*, were not worthy of *blame*, had *this* foul deed been by to sequel it! *He* was a man!—this, in respect, a *child!* And *men* ne’er spend their fury on a child!” she cries, with bitter, scornful contempt. “What’s *worse* than *murder*?—so that I may *name* it!” She sobs, “*No, no*, my heart will *burst* if I speak!—and I *will* speak, that so my heart *may* burst!”

“*Beggars* and *villains!* Bloody *cannibals!* How sweet a plant have you untimely *cropped!* You have no children, *butchers!*—if you *had*, the *thought* of them would have stirrèd up remorse! But if you ever chance to *have* a child,” she warns, “look in his *youth* to have *him* so cut off as, *deathmen*, you have rid this sweet young prince!”

“Away with her!” says King Edward. “*Go*, bear her hence *perforce!*” he tells the serving-men as she struggles.

“Nay, never bear me hence,” sobs Margaret, staring down at her son, “*dispatch me here!*” She clutches at her heart. “*Here* sheathe thy sword, and I’ll *pardon* thee my death!”

“What?—wilt thou not?” she asks Edward. “Then, Clarence, do it *thou!*”

George shakes his head. “By heaven, I will not do thee so much ease!”

“Good Clarence, *do*,” she pleads. “Sweet Clarence, do *thou* do it!”

“Didst thou not hear me swear I would not do it?”

“Aye—but thou *usest* to forswear thyself! ’Twas *sin* before, but now ’tis *charity*. What, wilt thou not?”

“Where is that *devil’s butcher*, hard-favoured Richard?” She looks around. “*Richard*, where art thou? *Murder*, thy *alms-deed*, petitions for *blood!* Thou ne’er pull’st back!—and thou *not here?*”

“*Away*, I say!” shouts Edward at the servants. “I charge ye, *bear her hence!*”

“So come to *you* and *yours* as to this prince!” wails Margaret as she is dragged away.

Edward asks George, “Where’s Richard gone?”

“To London, *all in post!*—and, as I guess, to make a bloody supper in the Tower!”

Edward is annoyed. “He’s *sudden*, if a thing comes into his head!”

“Now march we hence. Discharge the common sort with pay and thanks, and let’s away to London, and see our gentle *queen*, how well she fares!” Elizabeth is far along in her pregnancy.

He smiles in anticipation. “By now, I hope, she hath a *son* for me!”

Chapter Ten Another Prophecy

At the Tower in London, Henry, again being held prisoner in the lieutenant’s kindly custody, has been walking along the highest gray walls. The sometime sovereign is seated on a bench of sun-warmed stone near a slanting section of roof, reading, when a visitor is brought to him.

“Good day, my lord,” says Richard, without bowing. “What, at your book so hard?”

Henry looks up. "Aye, my good lord." He reconsiders. 'My lord' I should say, rather—'tis *sin* to *flatter*, and 'good' were *better*. 'Good *Gloucester*' and 'good *devil*' are alike—both *preposterous!* Therefore, 'not-good lord.'"

"Sirrah, leave us to ourselves," Richard tells the lieutenant abruptly. "We must *confer*." The officer, flushing, bows.

King Henry watches the chief keeper go back into the tall fortress's uppermost story. "So flies the reckless shepherd from the *wolf!* So the harmless sheep doth first yield his fleece—and next his *throat* unto the *butcher's* knife! What scene of death hath Roscius *now* to act?" The ancient Roman was renowned as a theatrical tragedian.

Richard shrugs. "Suspicion always haunts the *guilty* mind; the *thief* doth fear each bush is an officer."

The prisoner snaps shut his prayer-book. "The *bird* that hath been *limed* in a bush"—trapped so—"with trembling wings misdoubteth *every* bush! And I, the hapless mate to one *sweet* bird, have now the fatal object in my eye whereby *my* poor young was limed—was caught and *killed!*"

Richard realizes that, despite his haste, word of the prince's murder has flown ahead of him. "Why, what a *peevis*h fool was that of Crete who taught his son the office of a *fowl!*" he mutters. "And yet, for all his wings, *that* fool was drowned."

Henry gazing down at the city below, considers the simile. "I, *Daedalus*; my poor boy, *Icarus*." He glares at Richard. "Thy *father*, who denied our course, *Minos*; the *sun*, that seared the wings of my sweet boy, *thy brother Edward!* And *thysel*f, the *sea*, whose envious gulf did swallow up his life!"

Henry rises. "*Oh*, kill me with thy *weapon*, not with *words!* My breast can better brook thy dagger's point than can my ears that tragic history!" He sees that Richard is staring. "But wherefore *dost* thou come? Is't for my life?"

The Duke of Gloucester frowns. "Think'st thou I am an *executioner*?"

"A *persecutor*, I am sure thou art! If *murdering innocents* be executing, why, then thou *art* an executioner!"

"Thy son I killed for his *presumption*."

"Hadst *thou* been killed when first thou didst *presume*, thou hadst not lived to kill a son of mine!" He regards Richard with a sorrowful loathing. "But thus I prophesy: *death* for many a thousand who now share no parcel of my fear; and many an old man's *sigh*, and many a widow's; and many a water-stained eye—men for their *sons*, wives for their *husbands*, and orphans for their *parents*, untimely dead! They shall rue the hour that ever *thou* wast *born!*"

"The owl *shrieked* at thy birth—an *evil* sign!—the night-crow *cried*, boding luckless time; dogs *howled*, and a hideous *tempest* shook down trees! The raven rooked her on the chimney's top, and chattering magpies sang in dismal *discords!*"

"Thy mother felt *more* than a mother's pain, yet brought forth *less* than a mother's *hope!*—to wit, an indigested and deformed *lump*, not like the fruit of such a goodly tree! *Teeth* hadst thou in thy head when thou wast born, to signify thou *camest to bite the world!*"

"And, if the rest be true which I have heard, thou camest—"

"*I'll* hear no *more*," says Richard, drawing his sword. "*Die*, prophet, in thy *speech!*" The long blade pierces Henry. Richard pulls it back sharply, and watches as blood spills out. "For *this*, amongst the rest, was I ordained!"

Henry staggers back against the wall beside a low section of roof tile. "Aye, and for much *more* slaughter after this...."

"God forgive my sins," he murmurs, sinking, and looking at the quiet blue sky. He glances at Richard. "And pardon thee." He smiles and closes his eyes; soon he lies dead.

Richard regards the scarlet stain spreading down. *What?*—*will the aspiring blood of Lancaster sink to the ground?*—*I thought it would have mounted!*

See how my sword weeps for the poor king's death! Oh, may such purple tears always be shed from those that wish the downfall of our house!

“If any spark of life be yet remaining, down, down to Hell!” He thrusts the blade viciously into the corpse. “And say I sent thee thither!—I, that have neither pity, love, nor fear!”

He wipes the sword carefully with a linen handkerchief.

Indeed, 'tis true, what Henry told me of, he muses, as he tugs the king's body in past the door, *for I have often heard my mother say I came into the world with my legs forward! Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste, and seek their ruin that usurped our right!*

Crouched alone beside the corpse in a dim chamber, facing away from the glare of daylight, he ponders his birth. *The midwife gasped, and the women cried, 'O, Jesu bless us!—he is born with teeth!' And so I was—which plainly signified that I should snarl, and bite, and play the dog! Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so, let hell, to respond, make crookèd my mind! I have no brother; I am like no brother—this word 'love,' which graybeards call divine, be resident in men like one another—but not in me!*

I am myself alone!

He rises, and turns to squint toward the open door.

Clarence, beware!—thou keep'st me from the light! But I will arrange a pitch-black day for thee; for I will buzz abroad such prophecies that Edward shall be fearful for his life! And then, to purge his fear, I'll be thy death!

King Henry and the prince his son are gone. Clarence, thy turn is next, and then the rest—counting myself but bad till I be best!

Ready to leave, he looks at the king, now sprawled, one shoulder askew like Richard's, at the end of a trail of smeared blood.

I'll throw thy body into another room, —a grave, he means— and triumph, Henry, in thy day of doom!

—

In the palace at London, King Edward IV savors being able to rest. “Once more we sit in England's royal throne, repurchased with the blood of enemies!

“What valiant *foemen* have we mowed down like autumn's grain at the tops of all their pride! *Three* Dukes of Somerset, threefold *renowned* as hardy and undoubted *champions*; *two* Cliffords—as the father, the son; and two *Northumberlands*—two braver men ne'er spurred their coursers at the trumpet's sound!

“With them the two brave *bears*, Warwick and Montague, that in their chains fettered the kingly *lion*, and made the forest tremble when they roared!

“Thus have we swept *suspicion* from our seat, and made *security* our *footstool*!

“Come hither, Bess, and let me kiss my boy!” The queen brings him their newborn son.

He cradles the tranquil infant in his arms. “Young Ned, for *thee*, thine uncles and myself have in our armours watchèd through the winter's night, all gone afoot in summer's scalding heat, that thou mightst possess the crown in peace!—and of our labours, thou shalt reap the gain!”

Richard is watching the king. *I'd blast his harvest, if your head were laid!*

I am not well looked on in the world, but this shoulder was ordained so thick for to heave!—and heave some weight it shall, or break my back!

He tells himself, *Work out the way, and thou shalt execute!*

King Edward looks up, smiling. “Clarence and Gloucester, *love* my lovely queen!—and kiss your princely *nephew*, brothers both!”

George leans down to buss the child. “The duty that I owe unto Your Majesty I seal upon the lips of this sweet babe!”

Elizabeth smiles happily. “Thanks, noble Clarence; worthy brother-in-law, thanks!”

Richard approaches the king. He, too, bends to kiss the tiny prince. “And, as I love the tree from whence thou sprang'st, witness the loving kiss I give the fruit!” *To say the truth, so Judas kissed his master, and cried 'All hail!' when he meant 'All harm!'*

King Edward beams. “Now am I seated as my soul delights, having my country's peace, and brothers' loves!”

Elizabeth takes up the child, and George now asks Edward, “What will Your Grace have done with Margaret? Reignier, her father, to the King of France hath pawned the Sicils and Jerusalem,”—sold his rights to those domains, “and hither have they sent gold for her *ransom!*”

“Away with her, then,” says King Edward, comfortably. “Waft her hence to France.

“And now what rests but that we spend the time with stately triumphs, mirthful comic shows—such as befit the pleasure of the court!

“*Sound*, drums and trumpets! *Farewell*, sour annoy!

“For here, I hope, begins our *lasting joy!*”