

Henry VI Part 1 abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Death

Situation: While England's nobles were mourning the death of Henry V, the late king's body lying in state in Westminster Abbey, the same nobles were beginning to compete for power, seeking their moment, now that the new king, Henry VI, was but eight months old.

BEDFORD: Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!

Bedford to the Nobles

Seeing comets brandishing their tresses,
Portending the change of times, distresses
Me. Our England ne'er lost a king of so
Much worth. King Henry the Fifth, too famous
To live long, our brother. England doth owe
Him. His sword blinded men, protecting us.
Replete with wrathful fire, his sparkling eyes
More dazzled than the sun, but that belies
His virtue. What should I say? Never he
Lifted up his hand but that he conquers
The French. His deeds exceed all speech. Shall we
Think the subtle-witted French, conjurers
And sorcerers, unable to defend
Themselves, have by magic contrived his end?

EXETER: Death's dishonorable victory we with our stately presence glorify. Shall we curse the planets of mishap that plotted thus our glory's overthrow?

WINCHESTER: He was a king blessed of the King of Kings. The church's prayers made him so prosperous.

GLOUCESTER: The church! Where is it? Had not churchmen prayed his thread of life had not so soon decayed.

WINCHESTER: Gloucester, thy wife is proud: she holdeth thee in awe, more than God or religious churchmen may.

GLOUCESTER: Name not religion. Ne'er throughout the year to church thou goest except it be to pray against thy foes.