

Henry VI Part 2 abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1

Disillusionment

Situation: Having been the Protector of France, and France now having been lost to the French, the nobles gang up on Gloucester, claiming he “took bribes of France and stayed the soldiers’ pay.” The king leaves Gloucester to fend for himself, saying “’tis my special hope that you will clear yourself.”

SUFFOLK: My lord, these faults are easy, quickly answered; but mightier crimes are laid unto your charge. I do arrest you in His Highness’ name and here commit you to my lord Cardinal to keep, until your further time of trial.

KING: My lord of Gloucester, ‘tis my special hope that you will clear yourself from all suspense. My conscience tells me you are innocent.

Gloucester to King

**Ay, my lord, these are dangerous days. I
Know their conspiracy is to have my
Life; and if my death might make this island
Happy, I would gladly expend it. But
My death is but a prologue to this band
Of plotters’ play, leading to peril. What
Is seen in Beaufort’s eyes is malice and
In Suffolk’s brow his stormy hate. The hand
Of York stretcheth to accuse. My sovereign
Lady hath stirred up my liege to be my
Enemy. Ay, you come as one to turn
Away my guiltless life. I want no lie
Or false witness to condemn me nor wilt
Accept false treasons to augment my guilt.**

GLOUCESTER: The ancient proverb will be well effected: “A staff is quickly found to beat a dog.”

CARDINAL: My liege, his railing is intolerable.

SUFFOLK: Hath he not twit our sovereign lady here with ignominious words.

QUEEN: But I can allow the loser his say.

GLOUCESTER: Far truer spoke than meant. I lose, indeed: beshrew the winners, for they played me false!

BUCKINGHAM: He’ll wrest the sense and hold us here all day. Lord Cardinal, he is your prisoner.