

Henry VI Part 2 abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1

Wife to Husband

Situation: Gloucester, having been called by the Parliament to respond to its members' questions, arrives late. The queen, Suffolk, York and Cardinal Beaufort use the opportunity to aggressively lobby the king to have Gloucester arrested and put to death. Eleanor, Gloucester's wife, the Duchess of Gloucester, having done her best to warn him of the risks he was facing, her insight dismissed, is about to be exiled to the Isle of Man.

KING: I muse my lord of Gloucester is not come; 'tis not his wont to be the hindmost man, whate'er occasion keeps him from us now.

QUEEN: Can you not see? Will ye not observe the strangeness of his altered countenance?

Queen to King, No. 1

How insolent and unlike himself he
Is become. When he was affable we
Did not glance and he was on his knee. But
Meet him now he knits his brow and passeth
With unbowed knee, disdainful duty what
Doth to us belong. Humphrey, meseemeth,
Is next in descent should you fall; therefore
Should he come about your royal person or
Allowed into your Highness' Council?
Having won the commons' hearts he could make
Mischief. In spring, weeds have shallow roots; till
Them not and suffer them, they overtake
The garden. My care makes these dangers dear.
If it be fond, call it a woman's fear.

QUEEN: My lord of Suffolk, Buckingham, and York, reprove my allegation, if you can.

SUFFOLK: Well hath your Highness seen into this duke; and, had I first been put to speak my mind, I think I should have told your Grace's tale. Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep; and in his simple show he harbors treason. The fox barks not when he would steal the lamb. No, no, my sovereign, Gloucester is a man unsounded yet and full of deep deceit.

CARDINAL: Did he not devise strange deaths for small offenses done?

YORK: And did he not, in his protectorship, levy great sums of money through the realm, for soldiers' pay in France, and never sent it?

BUCKINGHAM: Tut, these are petty faults to faults unknown.

KING: My lords, to mow down thorns that would annoy our foot is worthy praise, but, shall I speak my conscience, our kinsman Gloucester is as innocent from meaning treason to our royal person as is the sucking lamb or harmless dove.

QUEEN: Ah, seems he a dove? Is he a lamb? His skin is surely lent him, for he's inclined as is the ravenous wolves. Take heed, my lord, the welfare of us all hangs on the cutting short that fraudulent man.