

Henry VIII abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 2

Deception

Situation: Buckingham has been arrested and sent to London's Tower, blaming his surveyor, saying "my surveyor is false." Norfolk had warned Buckingham to keep his opinions to himself, warning him that Wolsey was after his scalp. As well, the queen tells the king "your subjects are in great grievance," Wolsey having recently and secretly increased taxes, the king saying "what kind of tax is this?" Cardinal Wolsey defends his actions.

QUEEN KATHERINE: The subjects' grief comes through commissions which compels from each the sixth part of his substance, to be levied without delay, and the pretense for this is named your wars in France. This makes bold mouths. Their curses now live where their prayers did. I would your Highness would give it quick consideration, for there is no greater contemptible meanness.

KING: By my life, this is against our desire.

Wolsey to Henry VIII

If I am here misrepresented by
These ignorant tongues, which neither know my
Qualities nor person, yet will be the
Spokesmen of my doing, let me say 'tis
But the fate of service to the crown, a
Rough thicket that virtue must go through. Is
The thought of coping with these censurers
Consuming us with alarm that defers
Necessary action; letting them make
Mischiefs while we seem the envious and
Vainly longing weaker ones? If we take
Not root here where we sit, but rather stand
Still in fear our motion will be mocked, then
We are but mere images of statesmen.

KING: Have you a precedent of this tax? I believe, not any. We must not rend our subjects from our laws and stick them in our will. Sixth part of each? A tax to be trembled at with fear. Pray look to 't; I put it to your care.

WOLSEY ASIDE TO HIS SECRETARY: Let there be letters writ to every shire of the King's grace and pardon. Let it be spread about that through our intercession this revokement and pardon comes.