

Henry VIII abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 2

Deviousness

Situation: Wolsey has increased taxes. The duke of Buckingham is in the Tower, imprisoned in part as a result of comments made by his surveyor. The queen notes that Buckingham is in trouble, saying to the king “Buckingham is run in your displeasure.” The king says simply “it grieves many.” It’s at this point when Buckingham’s distrustful surveyor enters and speaks to the king, queen and Wolsey.

WOLSEY: Stand forth, and with bold spirit relate what you most like a careful subject have collected out of the Duke of Buckingham.

KING: Speak freely.

Surveyor to the King, Queen and Wolsey

First, every day he would inflect his speech
That if the King should without issue reach
Death, he’d move forward to make the scepter
His. These very words, and to seek to ban
The Lord Cardinal, I’ve heard him utter
To Abergavenny. Through a holy man
I was told “Neither the King nor his heirs
Shall prosper and that the Lord Duke who cares
For the commons shall govern England. Should
The King’s health fail, the Cardinal’s head goes.” Quoth
He, “If I were sent to prison I would
Play the part my father meant through his oath
To play against Richard, the usurper,
And put a knife into him, if I were.”

QUEEN KATHERINE: If I know you well, you were the Duke’s surveyor, and lost your office on the complaint o’ th’ tenants. Take good heed and charge not in your spleen a noble person and spoil your nobler soul.

SURVEYOR: On my soul, I’ll speak but truth.