

Richard II abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 2

Grief

Situation: Feeling powerless, the duchess of Gloucester, the duke of Gloucester's widow, is rebuffed by John of Gaunt when she asks him to avenge her husband's death, Gaunt deferring "to the will of heaven." She presents a powerful argument.

GAUNT TO THE DUCHESS: Since correction lieth in those hands which made the fault that we cannot correct, put we our quarrel to the will of heaven.

DUCHESS: Finds brotherhood in thee no sharper spur? Hath love in thy old blood no living fire?

Duchess of Gloucester to Gaunt

Those seven sons, thyself one, so well led
By Edward, were as vials of his sacred
Blood, or seven fair branches springing from
One root. Some of those seven are dried by
Nature's course, and life's thread was cut for some.
But one full vial of that sacred blood, my
Gloucester, was cracked by hatred's bloody-bold
Hand. Ah, Gaunt, his blood was thine! That self mold
That fashioned thee made him a man. Through strife
Thou livest and breathest, yet do thy die
In him, the model of thy father's life.
It is despair, Gaunt, to suffer thus thy
Brother to be killed, clearing the pathway
For him to murder thee. What shall I say?

DUCHESS: To safeguard thine own life, the best way is to venge my Gloucester's death.

GAUNT: God's in the quarrel; for God's substitute, His deputy anointed in His sight, hath caused his death, the which if wrongfully let heaven revenge, for I may never lift an angry arm against his minister.

DUCHESS: Where, then, alas, may I complain myself?

GAUNT: To God, the widow's champion and defense.

DUCHESS: Why then I will. Farewell, old Gaunt, thou goest to Coventry, there to behold our cousin Hereford and fell Mowbray fight. Farewell, old Gaunt. Thy sometime brother's wife with her companion, grief, must end her life.

GAUNT: Sister, farewell. I must to Coventry.

DUCHESS: Grief boundeth where it falls. Sorrow ends not when it seemeth done. Commend me to thy brother, Edmund York. Bid him with all good speed at Plashy visit me. Alack, let him not come there to seek out sorrow that dwells everywhere. The last leave of thee takes my weeping eye.