

Richard II abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Honor

Situation: Henry Bolingbroke, a cousin to the king, has accused a Thomas Mowbray of complicity in the death of the duke of Gloucester, the king's and Bolingbroke's uncle. Richard II gives Mowbray the opportunity to defend himself. Mowbray handles himself with courage and style. Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt, is present.

BOLINGBROKE TO MOWBRAY: Thou art a traitor and a miscreant, too good to be so, and too bad to live. What my tongue speaks, my right-drawn sword may prove.

MOWBRAY: I do defy him, call him a slanderous coward and a villain. Meantime most falsely doth he lie.

BOLINGBROKE: Pale trembling coward, there I throw my gage.

Mowbray picks up the gage.

MOWBRAY: I take it up, and by that sword I swear I'll answer thee in any fair degree.

RICHARD II: What doth our cousin lay to Mowbray's charge?

BOLINGBROKE: All the treasons for these eighteen years, plotted and contrived in this land fetch from false Mowbray. Further I say, that he did plot the Duke of Gloucester's death.

MOWBRAY: How God and good men hate so foul a liar.

RICHARD II TO MOWBRAY: Impartial are our eyes and ears, as he is but my father's brother's son. He is our subject, Mowbray, so art thou. Free speech and fearless I to thee allow.

Mowbray to Richard II

Honor is my life, for that let me try.
For that I live, and for that will I die.
My life thou shalt command, but not my shame.
Despite darkest death that lies upon my
Grave, thou shalt not dishonor my fair name.
Bolingbroke, through the false passage of thy
Throat, thou liest. Good Gloucester I slew not,
But once set ambush for your life, that brought
To me disgrace, honorable father
To my lesser foe. From men, take away
Spotless reputation, the great treasure,
And they're but gilded loam or painted clay.
Mine honor is my life; both grow in one.
Take honor from me and my life is done.

RICHARD II: We cannot make you friends. Be ready, as your lives shall answer it. At Coventry upon Saint Lambert's Day, you shall your swords and lances arbitrate the swelling difference of your settled hate.