

Richard III abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 4

Ruthlessness

Situation: When Lord Hastings, his mistress Miss Shore and his fellow royals learn of Richard's ambition to "wear the garland," Hastings tells Catesby that "I'll have this crown of mine cut from my shoulders before I'll see the crown so foul misplaced." Catesby then tells Buckingham who tells Richard that "we perceive Lord Hastings will not yield to our complots." At that point Richard responds "Chop off his head."

RICHARD: Look how I am bewitched! This is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch, in league with that harlot, strumpet Shore, that by their witchcraft thus have marked me.

HASTINGS: If they have done this deed, my noble lord-----

RICHARD: If? Thou protector of this damned strumpet, talk'st thou to me of "ifs"? Thou art a traitor. Off with his head.

Some exit. Ratcliffe remains with the Lord Hastings.

Hastings to Ratcliffe

Woe for England, not for me, for I might
Have prevented this. Stanley did that night
Dream the boar did destroy his line, and I
Did scorn it, disdain to fly. O, how,
Margaret, thy curse is lighted on my
Head. Where's the priest that spake to me. I now
Repent I told the messenger as too
Triumphing those deaths at Pomfret. He who
Carries mortal men's momentary love
May find his life's ship striking a sunken
Rock, just as he who builds hope in air on
Apparent favor lives like a drunken
Sailor on a mast ready at every
Nod to tumble into the fatal sea.

RATCLIFFE: Come, come, dispatch. The Duke would be at dinner. He longs to see your head.

HASTINGS: O bloody Richard! Miserable England, I prophesy the fearful'st time to thee that ever wretched age hath looked upon. Come, lead me to the block. Bear him my head. They smile at me who shortly shall be dead.