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1 Raigne: reign

2 Lamentable: pitiable

*The Troublesome Raigne¹ and Lamentable² Death of Edward the
Second, King of England*

By Christopher Marlowe

Adapted by Stephen M. Eckert and Keaton Shapiro

CAST

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Edward..... | Clayton Barry |
| Gaveston/Lightborn..... | Kyle Pitts |
| Isabella..... | Isabel Pask |
| Mortimer..... | Freddy Miyares |
| Kent..... | Kennedy McMann |
| Lancaster/Bishop of Coventry/Matrevis..... | Diyar Eyuboglu |
| Warwick/Gurney..... | Daryl Bright |
| Spencer/Bishop of Canterbury..... | Petr Favazza |

- 1 “My father... thy dearest friend”: Gaveston was exiled for 6 months by Edward I for being too friendly with Edward II
- 2 surfeit: to gorge oneself; overfill
- 3 base: morally low; cowardly; worthless
- 4 “the lordly peers”: refers to the lords who wanted Gaveston exiled
- 5 “My knee shall bow... King”: Possible allusion to marriage proposal. More direct reference to bowing to royalty, which was the custom of the time
- 6 wanton: sexual; exuding overt and somewhat offensive sexual desire; horny
- 7 pliant: easily influenced; malleable
- 8 “May draw ... please”: Gaveston is manipulative and expects to be able to manipulate Edward with entertainment, could be romantic or political.
- 9 Italian masques: entertaining performances involving music, theatre, and dance, which began in Italy and were popular in courts across Europe and would often involve political and social allegory.
- 10 sylvan nymphs: female spirits of the woods from Greek mythology who were often depicted in the nude and were considered beautiful and enticing.
- 11 page: a young male servant
- 12 satyr: a half-man, half-goat creature from Greek mythology
- 13 “Therefore I’ll have... antic hay”: reference to the Bacchanalia, which were raucous gatherings which took place in the woods and involved nudity, alcohol, sexuality, and mysticism. They were dedicated to Bacchus, god of wine, ritual madness, fertility, theatre, and religious ecstasy. Think Woodstock but in Ancient Rome.
- 14 Dian: Diana, Roman goddess of the hunt, the moon, and nature.
- 15 gilds: makes golden
- 16 Crownets: a small crown worn by the nobility
- 17 sportful: playful

ACT I
Scene 1

Enter GAVESTON reading a letter that was brought him from the King

GAVESTON

'My father is deceased; come, Gaveston,
And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend.'¹
Ah, words that make me surfeit² with delight!
What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston,
Than live and be the favorite of a king?
Farewell, base³ stooping to the lordly peers⁴;
My knee shall bow to none but to the King⁵.
As for the multitude, that are but sparks
Raked up in the embers of their poverty,
Fuck 'em!
These are not men for me;
I must have wanton⁶ poets, pleasant wits,
Musicians, that with touching of a string
May draw the pliant⁷ King which way I please⁸.
Music and poetry is his delight;
Therefore I'll have Italian masques⁹ by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows;
And in the day when he shall walk abroad,
Like sylvan nymphs¹⁰ my pages¹¹ shall be clad.
My men like satyrs¹² grazing on the lawns
Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay¹³;
Sometime a lovely boy in Dian¹⁴'s shape,
With hair that gilds¹⁵ the water as it glides,
Crownets¹⁶ of pearl about his naked arms,
And in his sportful¹⁷ hands an olive tree
To hide those parts which men delight to see,
Shall bathe him in a spring;
Such things as these please his majesty.

Exeunt Gaveston

- 1 My Lord: used when speaking respectfully to a man of higher rank
- 2 noblemen: men of noble birth or rank; the Lords
- 3 ne'er: never
- 4 ere: before
- 5 offend: to strike against
- 6 scabbard: a sheath for a sword
- 7 thy banners: flags carried before an army which bore the seal of the house the army was fighting for.
- 8 rue: regret
- 9 Beseems it thee: is it fitting for you
- 10 Frownst thou thereat: do you frown at that?
- 11 plane: to remove
- 12 furrows of thy brows: i.e. your frown; in context, this sword will remove your frown.
- 13 “and hew these knees that now are grown so stiff”: He’s calling Mortimer an old man while threatening him with both physically cutting him down as well as metaphorically cutting down his ego and sense of entitlement.
- 14 incense: make angry
- 15 base and obscure: lowly; of low birth
- 16 earldom: the territory governed by an earl

[Scene 1.2]

Enter EDWARD the King, LANCASTER, MORTIMER, Edmund Earl of KENT, Guy Earl of Warwick

LANCASTER

My Lord¹/

EDWARD

/Will you not grant me this? [*Aside*] In spite of them
I'll have my will, and these two noblemen²
That cross me thus shall know I am displeased.

MORTIMER

If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston.
These nobles here, this earl, and I myself
Were sworn to your father at his death,
That he should ne'er³ return into the realm;
And know, my lord, ere⁴ I will break my oath,
This sword of mine that should offend⁵ your foes,
Shall sleep within the scabbard⁶ at thy need,
And underneath thy banners⁷ march who will,
For Mortimer will hang his armor up.

EDWARD

Well Mortimer, I'll make thee rue⁸ these words.
Beseems it thee⁹ to contradict thy King?
Frownst¹⁰ thou thereat, aspiring Lancaster?
My sword shall plane¹¹ the furrows of thy brows¹²
And hew these knees that now are grown so stiff¹³.
I will have Gaveston; and you shall know
What danger 'tis to stand against your King.

LANCASTER

My lord, why do you thus incense¹⁴ your peers
That naturally would love and honor you,
But for that base and obscure¹⁵ Gaveston?
Four earldoms¹⁶ have I besides Lancaster.
These will I sell to give my soldiers pay,
Ere Gaveston shall stay within the realm.
Therefore if he be come, expel him straight.

KENT

Barons and earls, your pride hath made me mute.

- 1 to the proof: irrefutably; inarguably
- 2 brave: challenge; defy
- 3 “and let their heads... of their tongues”: A common form of execution for traitors was beheading, after which the severed heads would be publicly displayed on poles in front of the castle as a warning.
- 4 Cousin: a term used by a sovereign when addressing a nobleman. In being of lower rank than Edward, Mortimer is being insulting and arrogant.
- 5 fence: shield
- 6 “And strike off his that makes you threaten us”: i.e. strike off Gaveston’s head
- 7 Welshry: the people of Wales
- 8 “All Warwickshire... many friends”: both lines are spoken ironically
- 9 glozing: flattering
- 10 minion: the favorite of a powerful man; could also refer to a homosexual lover. From the French *mignon* meaning ‘sweet’ or ‘delicate’
- 11 brook: endure
- 12 haughty: arrogant
- 13 menaces: threats
- 14 display my ensigns in the field: carry my banner in the fight, i.e. fight for me in this battle.
- 15 bandy: strike each other back and forth [tennis term]

But now I'll speak, and to the proof¹ I hope:
Dare you brave² the King unto his face?
Brother, revenge it; and let these their heads
Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues³.

WARWICK

O' our heads!

EDWARD

Ay, yours; and therefore I would wish you grant.

WARWICK

Bridle thy anger, gentle Mortimer.

MORTIMER

I cannot, nor I will not; I must speak.
Cousin⁴, our hands I hope shall fence⁵ our heads,
And strike off his that makes you threaten us⁶.
Come then, let us leave the brainsick King,
Welshry⁷ hath man enough to save our heads.

WARWICK

All Warwickshire will love him for my sake.

LANCASTER

And northward Gaveston hath many friends⁸.
Adieu my lord; and either change your mind,
Or look to see the throne where you should sit
To float in blood, and at thy wanton head
The glozing⁹ head of thy base minion¹⁰ thrown.

Exeunt NOBLES (except KENT)
[Scene 1.3]

EDWARD

I cannot brook¹¹ these haughty¹² menaces¹³:
Am I a king and must be overruled?
Brother, display my ensigns in the field¹⁴;
I'll bandy¹⁵ with the barons and the earls,
And either die or live with Gaveston.

- 1 Embrace me: could refer to clasping another on the arm to imply friendship, though more likely much more physically connected here.
- 2 kneel: the expected position when meeting with a sovereign.
- 3 knowest thou not: do you not know; i.e. why are you kneeling, you know me too well for that.
- 4 “Not Hylas... Hercules: Hylas and Hercules went together on the journey of the Argonauts (who went to find the golden fleece). Hylas was kidnapped by water-nymphs in Mysia. Hercules could not bear to leave the island without Hylas, and remained searching for him while the rest of the Argonauts returned to their journey.
- 5 went from hence: left here
- 6 Hath: has
- 7 conspire: plot secretly to do something criminal or reprehensible
- 8 high-minded: arrogant
- 9 I joy thy sight: I am happy to see you
- 10 transport thee hence: take you away from here
- 11 I here create thee: I appoint you
- 12 Lord High Chamberlain: senior officer of the Royal Household of the UK. Acted as the King’s spokesman in Council and Parliament
- 13 Chief Secretary: the third office of state in the kingdom; deals with communication with the sovereign
- 14 King and Lord of Man: ruler of the Isle of Man, an island off the western shore of England, who held certain sovereign rights
- 15 suffice: be enough
- 16 greater birth: someone born into higher noble rank
- 17 cease: stop immediately
- 18 dignities: honorable and high ranking positions
- 19 envied: i.e. if people are jealous of you for these titles
- 20 kingly regiment: the king’s rule; i.e. the only reason I am happy to rule is because I can give you things.
- 21 Fearest thou thy person?: Are you afraid for your safety?
- 22 treasury: the room where all the king’s wealth is kept

Enter Gaveston
[Scene 1.4]

GAVESTON

Well done, Ned.

EDWARD

What, Gaveston! Welcome! Kiss not my hand;
Embrace me¹, Gaveston as I do thee!
Why shouldst thou kneel²; knowest thou not³ who I am?
Thy friend, thy self, another Gaveston!
Not Hylas was more mourned of Hercules⁴
Than thou hast been of me since thy exile.

GAVESTON

And since I went from hence⁵, no soul in hell
Hath⁶ felt more torment than poor Gaveston.

EDWARD

I know it. [To KENT] Brother, welcome home my friend.
[To GAVESTON] Now let the treacherous Mortimer conspire⁷.
And that high-minded⁸ Earl of Lancaster.
I have my wish, in that I joy thy sight⁹,
And sooner shall the sea o'erwhelm my land
Than bear the ship that shall transport thee hence¹⁰.
I here create thee¹¹ Lord High Chamberlain¹²,
Chief Secretary¹³ to the state and me,
Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man¹⁴.

GAVESTON

My lord, these titles far exceed my worth.

KENT

Brother, the least of these may well suffice¹⁵
For one of greater birth¹⁶ than Gaveston/

EDWARD

/Cease¹⁷, Brother!
[To GAVESTON] Thy worth, sweet friend, is far above my gifts,
Therefore to equal it, receive my heart.
If for these dignities¹⁸ thou be envied¹⁹,
I'll give thee more, for but to honor thee
Is Edward pleased with kingly regiment²⁰.
Fear'st thou thy person²¹? Thou shalt have a guard.
Wants thou gold? Go to my treasury²².

- 1 my seal: a token of royal authority, often a ring, which can be pressed in wax to simultaneously seal and sign a letter
- 2 condemn: pronounce guilty
- 3 our name: significant that he refers to them together. Recalls the fact that they were sworn brothers-in-arms and saying Gaveston essentially has the power to rule in Edward's name.
- 4 affects: i.e. whatever you think is best
- 5 fancy likes: i.e. whatever you want to do
- 6 Caesar: Roman dictator in the first century BCE
- 7 captive kings: i.e. of conquered nations
- 8 car: chariot
- 9 "As Caesar... triumphant car": a popular image of conquest
- 10 wicked: bad; morally depraved
- 11 priest: acceptable, but not particularly respectful, form of address for a clergyman
- 12 wert: were
- 13 but for: were it not for
- 14 plod: step
- 15 Saving your reverence: a phrase used to ask pardon of a holy man, ironic and insulting in this case. Similar to "with all due respect"
- 16 reverence: deep respect
- 17 mitre: head-dress which symbolized the office of the bishop
- 18 rend: tear
- 19 stole: long robe
- 20 channel: the sewer pipes
- 21 christen him anew: a reference to the baptism of infants and children
- 22 See of Rome: the Pope
- 23 Seize upon his goods: take everything he owns from his home lord bishop: traditional form of address for bishops of the Church
- 24 his rents: income, raised by taxes for the church

Wouldst thou be loved and feared? Receive my seal¹,
Save or condemn², and in our name³ command
What so thy mind affects⁴ or fancy likes⁵.

GAVESTON

It shall suffice me to enjoy your love,
Which whiles I have, I think myself as great
As Caesar⁶ riding in the Roman street,
With captive kings⁷ at his triumphant car^{8,9}.

Enter the BISHOP OF COVENTRY
[Scene 1.5]

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

But is that wicked¹⁰ Gaveston returned?

EDWARD

Ay, priest¹¹, and lives to be revenged on thee
That wert¹² the only cause of his exile.

GAVESTON

'Tis true, and but for¹³ reverence of these robes
Thou shouldst not plod¹⁴ one foot beyond this place.

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

I did no more than I was bound to do.

GAVESTON

Saving your reverence^{15,16}, you must pardon me.

EDWARD

Throw off his golden mitre¹⁷, rend¹⁸ his stole¹⁹,
And in the channel²⁰ christen him anew²¹.

[They both assault COVENTRY]

KENT

Ah brother, lay not violent hands on him,
For he'll complain unto the See of Rome²².

GAVESTON

Let him complain unto the See of Hell;
I'll be revenged on him for my exile.

EDWARD

No, spare his life, but seize upon his goods²³.
Be thou lord bishop, and receive his rents²⁴.

- 1 chaplain: the priest of a chapel
- 2 I give him thee: I give him to you
- 3 bolts: shackles; chains; handcuffs
- 4 tower: i.e. imprison him in the Tower of London
- 5 the Fleet: a prison near the Thames
- 6 accurst of God: damned by God
- 7 convey: take; carry
- 8 my guard: my soldiers to guard you
- 9 fair: beautiful
- 10 beseem: be more appropriate for
- 11 tyrannize: Edward is acting as a tyrant by imprisoning the bishop, thereby usurping the church
- 12 the Church: as an institution with political power
- 13 timeless: both eternal and untimely
- 14 sepulchre: tomb; grave
- 15 villain: rascal; scoundrel *also* serf; bondsman

And make him serve thee as your chaplain¹.
I give him thee², here, use him as thou wilt.

GAVESTON

He shall to prison, and there die in bolts³.

EDWARD

Ay, to the tower⁴, the Fleet⁵, or where thou wilt.

BISHOP OF COVENTRY

For this offence be thou accurst of God⁶.

EDWARD

We'll convey⁷ this priest unto the Tower.
But in the meantime Gaveston, away,
And take possession of his house and goods.
Come, follow me, and thou shalt have my guard⁸
To see it done and bring thee safe again.

GAVESTON

What should a priest do with so fair⁹ a house?
A prison may beseem¹⁰ his holiness.

Exeunt

[Scene 2.1]

Enter MORTIMER, WARWICK, and LANCASTER

WARWICK

'Tis true, the Bishop is in the Tower
And goods and body given to Gaveston.

LANCASTER

What, will they tyrannize¹¹ upon the Church¹²?
Ah, wicked King! Accursed Gaveston!
This ground which is corrupted with their steps
Shall be their timeless¹³ sepulchre¹⁴, or mine.

MORTIMER

Unless his breast be sword-proof he shall die.

WARWICK

That villain¹⁵ Gaveston is made an earl!

MORTIMER

An earl!

WARWICK

Ay, and besides, Lord Chamberlain of the realm,

- 1 suffer: tolerate
- 2 Doth: does
- 3 take exception: object
- 4 the slave: rascal, used as a term of contempt
- 5 stomach: resent
- 6 bewrays: reveals
- 7 hale: drag
- 8 bosom of the King: the King's side, i.e. the safety of being favorite of the King and being both physically and metaphorically next to him
- 9 court gate: the cities of the time were literally walled, so the court gate was the gate that allowed entry into and exit from the city.
- 10 my lord of Canterbury's grace: a bishop was traditionally addressed as 'your grace,' with specificity of domain in "my lord of..."
- 11 take arms against: go to war with
- 12 near: deeply; personally
- 13 bishopric: a bishop's territory

And Secretary too, and Lord of Man!

MORTIMER

We may not, nor we will not suffer¹ this.
Doth² no man take exception³ to the slave⁴?

LANCASTER

All stomach⁵ him, but none dare speak a word.

MORTIMER

Ah, that bewrays⁶ their baseness, Lancaster.
Were all the earls and barons of my mind,
We'll hale⁷ him from the bosom of the King⁸,
And at the court gate⁹ hang the peasant up,
Who, swoll'n with venom of ambitious pride,
Will be the ruin of the realm and us.

Enter BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

[Scene 2.2]

WARWICK

Here comes my lord of Canterbury's grace¹⁰.

LANCASTER

My lord, you will take arms against¹¹ the King?

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

What need I? God himself is up in arms
When violence is offered to the Church.

MORTIMER

Then will you join with us that be his peers
To banish or behead that Gaveston?

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

What else, my lords? For it concerns me near¹²;
The bishopric¹³ of Coventry is his.
But yet lift not your swords against the King.

LANCASTER

No, but we'll lift Gaveston from hence.

WARWICK

And war must be the means, or he'll stay still.

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

My lords, to ease all this but hear me speak.
We and the rest that are his councillors
Will meet and with a general consent

- 1 Confirm: make valid; sanction; authorize
- 2 frustrate: veto; undo; defeat
- 3 lawfully revolt: they will have reasonable cause to revolt against the king, and it will be legal because he will have overturned an order of the Church, which had higher legal rank than royalty.
- 4 whither: where
- 5 baleful: wretched
- 6 regards: pays attention to; considers emotionally
- 7 dotes: endows with riches; bestow excessive love and fondness on; *with double meaning of to be silly or deranged*
- 8 claps: slaps affectionately
- 9 Go whither thou wilt: go away; go wherever you like; i.e. do what you want, I don't care, just do it away from here
- 10 bewitched: captivated; under a spell; *lit.* influenced by witchcraft
- 11 inveigling: deceiving
- 12 "That sly inveigling Frenchman": Gaveston, who is from Gascony in France.
- 13 civil mutinies: civil wars
- 14 melancholy: sad; gloomy; angry
- 15 Forbear: abstain from; refrain from
- 16 levy: undertake; commence; i.e. to make war

Confirm¹ his banishment with our hands and seals.

LANCASTER

What we confirm the King will frustrate².

MORTIMER

Then may we lawfully revolt³ from him.

LANCASTER

Come then, let's away.

Exeunt all except MORTIMER, Enter ISABELLA (the Queen)
[Scene 2.3]

MORTIMER

Madam, whither⁴ walks your majesty so fast?

ISABELLA

To live in grief and baleful⁵ discontent;
For now my lord the King regards⁶ me not,
But dotes⁷ upon the love of Gaveston.
He claps⁸ his cheeks and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears;
And when I come he frowns, as if to say,
'Go whither thou wilt⁹, seeing I have Gaveston.'
Is it not strange that he is thus bewitched¹⁰?

MORTIMER

Madam, return unto the court again.
That sly inveigling¹¹ Frenchman¹² we'll exile,
Or lose our lives; and yet, ere that day come,
The King shall lose his crown, for we have power
And courage too, to be revenged at full.

ISABELLA

Then let him stay; for rather than my lord
Shall be opposed by civil mutinies¹³,
I will endure a melancholy¹⁴ life,
And let him frolic with his minion.

MORTIMER

Madam, farewell.

ISABELLA

Farewell, sweet Mortimer; and for my sake.
Forbear¹⁵ to levy¹⁶ arms against the King.

- 1 Ay: Yes
- 2 moved: angered [by the fact that...]
- 3 sits here: i.e. in the throne beside the King, where the Queen is meant to sit.
- 4 scornful: full of contempt
- 5 peasant: a countryman or rustic, of low birth, regarded as ignorant, crass, and rude
- 6 fawn: to show delight at the presence of; to caress
- 7 duty: respect; reverence
- 8 pay them home: discipline them; chastise them
- 9 wherefore: i.e. why do you talk about being a kind when you are barely a nobleman at all

MORTIMER

Ay¹, if words will serve; if not, I must.

[Scene 4.1]

*Enter NOBLES [LANCASTER, WARWICK, MORTIMER, BISHOP OF CANTERBURY]
EDWARD, GAVESTON, and KENT*

EDWARD

What, are you moved² that Gaveston sits here³?
It is our pleasure; we will have it so.

LANCASTER

Your grace doth well to place him by your side,
For nowhere else the new Earl is so safe.

MORTIMER

What man of noble birth can brook this sight?
See what a scornful⁴ look the peasant⁵ casts.

WARWICK

Can kingly lions fawn⁶ on creeping ants?
[The NOBLES spit on GAVESTON]

KENT

Is this the duty⁷ that you owe your king?

WARWICK

We know our duties; let him know his peers.

[The NOBLES seize GAVESTON]

EDWARD

Whither will you bear him? Stay or ye shall die.

MORTIMER

We are no traitors, therefore threaten not.

GAVESTON

No, threaten not my lord, but pay them home⁸.
Were I a king/

MORTIMER

Thou villain, wherefore⁹ talks thou of a king.
That hardly art a gentleman by birth?

EDWARD

Were he a peasant, being my minion,

- 1 disparage: dishonor
- 2 overruled: *lit.* ruled over, he's saying that they're usurping his power and thus ruling over him.
- 3 wrathful fury: angry anger
- 4 Subscribe: sign in agreement
- 5 overdaring: rash; foolhardy
- 6 isle: island, in this case the British isle
- 7 fleet: float
- 8 unfrequented Inde: the rarely visited West Indies – a region in the Caribbean including multiple islands
- 9 legate: deputy; representative
- 10 Depose: dethrone; take out of office
- 11 yield: give in

I'll make the proudest of you stoop to him.
LANCASTER

My lord, you may not thus disparage¹ us.
Away, I say, with hateful Gaveston.

MORTIMER

Go with him, Earl of Kent, you favor him.

Exeunt GAVESTON and KENT
[Scene 4.2]

EDWARD

Nay, then lay violent hands upon your King.
Here, Mortimer, sit thou in Edward's throne;
Warwick and Lancaster, wear you my crown.
Was ever king thus overruled² as I?

LANCASTER

Learn then to rule us better and the realm.

EDWARD

Anger and wrathful fury³ stops my speech.

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Why are you moved? Be patient, my lord.
And see what we your councillors have done.
Subscribe⁴ as we have done to his exile.

[He presents the document of GAVESTON's exile to EDWARD]

EDWARD

Meet you for this, proud overdaring⁵ peers?
Ere my sweet Gaveston shall part from me,
This isle⁶ shall fleet⁷ upon the ocean
And wander to the unfrequented Inde⁸.

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

You know that I am legate⁹ to the Pope;
On your allegiance to the See of Rome,
Subscribe as we have done to his exile.

MORTIMER

Curse him if he refuse, and then may we
Depose¹⁰ him and elect another king.

EDWARD

Ay, there it goes, but yet I will not yield¹¹.
Curse me. Depose me. Do the worst you can.

1 lown: *[laʊn]* peasant

2 accursed: damned; detestable; hateful

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Remember how the Bishop was abused;
Either banish him that was the cause thereof,
Or I will presently discharge these lords
Of duty and allegiance due to thee.

EDWARD

It boots me not to threat; I must speak fair,
The legate of the Pope will be obeyed.
My lord, you shall be Chancellor of the realm;
Thou, Lancaster, High Admiral of our fleet.
Young Mortimer shall be earl,
And you, Lord Warwick, President of the North,
And also of Wales. If this content you not,
Make several kingdoms of this monarchy,
And share it equally amongst you all,
So I may have some nook or corner left
To frolic with my dearest Gaveston.

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Nothing shall alter us; we are resolved.

LANCASTER

Come, come subscribe.

MORTIMER

Why should you love him whom the world hates so?

EDWARD

Because he loves me more than all the world.

MORTIMER

The King is love-sick for his minion.

WARWICK

You that are princely born should shake him off.
For shame subscribe, and let the lown¹ depart.

MORTIMER

Urge him, my lord!

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Are you content to banish him the realm?

EDWARD

I see I must, and therefore am content;
Instead of ink, I'll write it with my tears.

[He signs the document]

'Tis done, and now accursed² hand fall off.

- 1 presently: immediately
- 2 dispatched: sent off
- 3 the common sort: the common people
- 4 linger: stay; dwell
- 5 Proud Rome: referred to because the seat of the Church was with the Pope in Rome.
- 6 imperial: commanding; dominant
- 7 grooms: servants
- 8 taper-lights: candles for prayer
- 9 Wherewith: by means of which; i.e. the churches are set aflame with these candles
- 10 fire: set fire to
- 11 crazed: flimsy, unstable; additional meaning of moral corruption
- 12 "I'll fire thy... the lowly ground!": I'll burn down the churches with their own prayers.
- 13 Tiber: the River Tiber in Rome which was critical to Roman trade in the 1st century BCE
- 14 fly: leave suddenly or immediately

LANCASTER

I'll see him presently¹ dispatched² away.

BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Now is my heart at ease.

WARWICK

And so is mine.

This will be good news to the common sort³.

MORTIMER

Be it or no, he shall not linger⁴ here.

Exeunt NOBLES and THE BISHOP OF CANTERBURY

[Scene 4.3]

EDWARD

How fast they run to banish him I love!
They would not stir, were it to do me good.
Why should a king be subject to a priest?
Proud Rome⁵! that hatchest such imperial⁶ grooms⁷,
For these thy superstitious taper-lights⁸,
Wherewith⁹ thy antichristian churches blaze,
I'll fire¹⁰ thy crazed¹¹ buildings, and enforce
The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground¹²!
With slaughtered priests make Tiber¹³'s channel swell,
And banks rais'd higher with their sepulchres!
As for the peers, that back the clergy thus,
If I be king, not one of them shall live.

Enter GAVESTON

[Scene 4.4]

GAVESTON

My lord, I hear it whispered everywhere,
That I am banish'd, and must fly¹⁴ the land.

EDWARD

'Tis true, sweet Gaveston. O! were it false!
The legate of the Pope will have it so,
And thou must hence, or I shall be depos'd.
But I will reign to be reveng'd of them;
And therefore, sweet friend, take it patiently.

- 1 forsake: deny; renounce; abandon; leave
- 2 gracious: beautiful; charming
- 3 blessedness: superlative happiness
- 4 felicity: happiness; bliss
- 5 governor of Ireland: senior official in the Dublin Castle administration, which was a force that maintained British rule in Ireland until 1922. The governor of Ireland was also personal representative of the King.
- 6 'twill: it will
- 7 bear: accompany
- 8 pass: care
- 9 strumpet: harlot; whore; prostitute

GAVESTON

Is all my hope turned to this hell of grief?

EDWARD

Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words:

Thou from this land, I from myself am banish'd.

GAVESTON

To go from hence grieves not poor Gaveston;

But to forsake¹ you, in whose gracious² looks

The blessedness³ of Gaveston remains,

For nowhere else seeks he felicity⁴.

EDWARD

Thou must depart.

Live where thou wilt, I'll send thee gold enough;

Be governor of Ireland⁵ in my stead,

And there abide till fortune call thee home.

GAVESTON

'Tis something to be pitied of a king.

EDWARD

Thou shalt not hence. I'll hide thee, Gaveston.

GAVESTON

I shall be found, and then 'twill⁶ grieve me more.

EDWARD

Then come, sweet friend, I'll bear⁷ thee on thy way.

GAVESTON

The peers will frown.

EDWARD

I pass⁸ not for their anger. Come, let's go;

O that we might as well return as go.

Enter KENT and Queen ISABELLA

[Scene 4.5]

ISABELLA

Whither goes my lord?

EDWARD

Fawn not on me, French strumpet⁹; get thee gone.

ISABELLA

On whom but on my husband should I fawn?

- 1 bawd: a person who assists in the immoral urges or evil desires of others; an enabler
- 2 affections: desires; passions
- 3 “call mine honor thus in question”: It was a serious accusation to imply that a woman was being adulterous
- 4 familiar: close with, implying sexual intimacy
- 5 reconcile: i.e. bring the lords back to my side
- 6 Wherein: in what
- 7 repeal'd: called back from exile
- 8 Assure thyself: make sure
- 9 Circe: minor goddess and witch from Greek mythology
- 10 “That charming Circe... changed my shape”: a reference to a scene in Homer’s The Odyssey in which Circe turns all of Odysseus’s sailors into pigs.
- 11 Hymen: god of marriage
- 12 stifled: strangled

GAVESTON

On Mortimer, with whom, ungentle queen-
I say no more; judge you the rest my lord.

ISABELLA

In saying this, thou wrongest me, Gaveston
Is't not enough that thou corrupts my lord,
And art a bawd¹ to his affections²,
But thou must call mine honor thus in question³?

GAVESTON

I mean not so; your grace must pardon me.

EDWARD

Thou art too familiar⁴ with that Mortimer,
And by thy means is Gaveston exil'd;
But I would wish thee reconcile⁵ the lords,
Or thou shalt ne'er be reconcil'd to me.

ISABELLA

Your highness knows it lies not in my power.

EDWARD

Away then! touch me not. Come, Gaveston.

ISABELLA

Wherein⁶, my lord, have I deserv'd these words?
Witness the tears that Isabella sheds,
Witness this heart, that, sighing for thee, breaks,
How dear my lord is to poor Isabel.

EDWARD

And witness Heaven how dear thou art to me!
There weep; for till my Gaveston be repeal'd⁷,
Assure thyself⁸ thou com'st not in my sight.

Exeunt EDWARD and GAVESTON

[Scene 4.6]

ISABELLA

O miserable and distressed queen!
Would, when I left sweet France and was embark'd,
That charming Circe⁹, walking on the waves,
Had changed my shape¹⁰, or at the marriage-day
The cup of Hymen¹¹ had been full of poison,
Or with those arms that twin'd about my neck
I had been stifled¹², and not liv'd to see

- 1 Juno: Roman goddess of the state and protector of women.
- 2 ghastly: horrifying
- 3 murmur: rumor; expression of discontent
- 4 “Like frantic Juno... sighs and cries”: refers to a myth in which Juno became jealous when Jove, her husband, chose Ganymede, a Trojan hero, to be his cup-bearer because of his beauty. Marlowe dramatized this myth in other works of his.
- 5 exasperate: irritate; aggravate
- 6 entreat: negotiate with
- 7 speak him fair: speak to him nicely; speak to him kindly
- 8 means: a method
- 9 ever: forever
- 10 doat: dote, see p.8
- 11 ill-entreated: treated poorly
- 12 long of: on account of
- 13 Cry quittance: retaliate; annul your marriage; i.e. leave him
- 14 humour: temperament; disposition
- 15 enjoined: obliged; bound by oath; i.e. she is bound to ask because her husband, the king to whom she is obliged, has asked her to.
- 16 sue: beg
- 17 wills: desires

The king my lord thus to abandon me!
Like frantic Juno¹ will I fill the earth
With ghastly² murmur³ of my sighs and cries⁴;
But that will more exasperate⁵ his wrath;
I must entreat⁶ him, I must speak him fair⁷,
And be a means⁸ to call home Gaveston.
And yet he'll ever⁹ doat¹⁰ on Gaveston;
And so am I forever miserable.

Enter LANCASTER, WARWICK, MORTIMER
[Scene 4.7]

LANCASTER

Look where the sister of the King of France
Sits wringing of her hands, and beats her breast!
The king, I fear, hath ill-entreated¹¹ her.

MORTIMER

I know 'tis 'long of¹² Gaveston she weeps.

WARWICK

Why? He is gone.

MORTIMER

Madam, how fares your grace?

ISABELLA

Ah, Mortimer! Now breaks the king's hate forth,
And he confesseth that he loves me not.

MORTIMER

Cry quittance¹³, madam, then; and love not him.

LANCASTER.

Fear ye not, madam; now his minion's gone,
His wanton humour¹⁴ will be quickly left.

ISABELLA

O never, Lancaster! I am enjoined¹⁵
To sue¹⁶ upon you all for his repeal;
This wills¹⁷ my lord, and this must I perform,
Or else be banish'd from his highness' presence.

MORTIMER

But, madam, would you have us call him home?

ISABELLA

Ay, Mortimer, for till he be restor'd,

- 1 tend'rest: care for
- 2 advocate: a person who speaks on behalf of another person
- 3 plead: beg
- 4 Dissuade: advise against; influence against; change her mind.
- 5 abhor: loathe; hate to the level of disgust
- 6 your honours: plural form of address to the lords.
- 7 avail: advantage
- 8 behoof: benefit
- 9 Fie: an exclamation expressing disgust
- 10 "Such reasons ... night day": a proverb, implying world-altering
- 11 zeal: burning love and affection
- 12 mend: reform

The angry king hath banish'd me the court;
And, therefore, as thou lov'st and tend'rest¹ me,
Be thou my advocate² unto these peers.

MORTIMER

What! would you have me plead³ for Gaveston?

LANCASTER

We are resolv'd, my lord. Dissuade⁴ the queen.

ISABELLA

O Lancaster! let him dissuade the King,
For 'tis against my will he should return.

WARWICK

Then speak not for him, let the peasant go.

ISABELLA

'Tis for myself I speak, and not for him.

ISABELLA whispers in MORTIMER's ear then kneels before him

MORTIMER

Well, of necessity it must be so.
My lords, that I abhor⁵ base Gaveston,
I hope your honours⁶ make no question,
And therefore, though I plead for his repeal,
'Tis not for his sake, but for our avail⁷;
Nay for the realm's behoof⁸, and for the king's.

LANCASTER

Fie⁹, Mortimer, dishonour not thyself!
Can this be true, 'twas good to banish him?
And is this true, to call him home again?
Such reasons make white black, and dark night day¹⁰.

MORTIMER

Do you not wish that Gaveston were dead?

WARWICK

I would he were!

MORTIMER

Why, then, my lord, give me but leave to speak.
This which I urge is of a burning zeal¹¹
To mend¹² the king, and do our country good.
Know you not Gaveston hath store of gold,
Which may in Ireland purchase him such friends

- 1 front: confront
- 2 whereas: while
- 3 work: effect, bring about
- 4 suborn'd: bribed
- 5 poniard: dagger
- 6 chronicle: historical record
- 7 enrol: write (a name)
- 8 He saith true: he speaks the truth
- 9 chance: i.e. how is it possible
- 10 it was not thought upon: we didn't think of it
- 11 color: pretext
- 12 howsoever we have borne it out: no matter how we justify it
- 13 night-grown mushroom: idiomatic, meaning it will be like it happened overnight; surprising.
- 14 buckler: shield
- 15 the strongest hold he hath: i.e. his toughest stronghold, his castle
- 16 "Then may we with... the strongest hold he hath": i.e. Fighting against the king is treason, so we will bolster support from the common people – who only side with this king because of his father – and when everyone revolts not even the king will be able to protect Gaveston from us.
- 17 "Lancaster will grant": i.e. Lancaster agrees to this plan.
- 18 gratified: pleased; content

As he will front¹ the mightiest of us all?
And whereas² he shall live and be belov'd,
'Tis hard for us to work³ his overthrow.

WARWICK

Mark you but that, my lord of Lancaster.

MORTIMER

But were he here, detested as he is,
How easily might some base slave be suborn'd⁴
To greet his lordship with a poniard⁵,
And none so much as blame the murderer,
But rather praise him for that brave attempt,
And in the chronicle⁶ enrol⁷ his name
For purging of the realm of such a plague!

WARWICK

He saith true⁸.

LANCASTER

Ay, but how chance⁹ this was not done before?

MORTIMER

Because, my lords, it was not thought upon¹⁰.

LANCASTER

But how if he do not?

MORTIMER

Then may we with some color¹¹ rise in arms;
For howsoever we have borne it out¹²,
'Tis treason to be up against the king.
So we shall have the people of our side,
Which for his father's sake lean to the king,
But cannot brook a night-grown mushroom¹³,
Such a one as my lord of Cornwall is,
Should bear us down of the nobility.
And when the commons and the nobles join,
'Tis not the king can buckler¹⁴ Gaveston;
We'll pull him from the strongest hold he hath^{15,16}.

LANCASTER

Lancaster will grant¹⁷.

WARWICK

And so will I.

MORTIMER

In this I count me highly gratified¹⁸,

- 1 rest: remain
- 2 This news will glad him much: This news will make him very happy.
- 3 harps: dwells on
- 4 Cyclops' hammers: reference to the Cyclops of classical mythology who acted as blacksmiths and forged lightning-bolts for Jupiter
- 5 up: upside down
- 6 giddy: foolish; stupid; insane
- 7 Fury: in classical mythology, the Furies punished wrongdoers and lived in the underworld
- 8 parley'd: spoken with an enemy

And Mortimer will rest¹ at your command.
ISABELLA

And when this favour Isabel forgets,
Then let her live abandon'd and forlorn.
But see, in happy time, my lord the King,
Is new return'd. This news will glad him much²,

Enter EDWARD, mourning
[Scene 4.8]

EDWARD

He's gone, and for his absence thus I mourn.
Did never sorrow go so near my heart
As doth the want of my sweet Gaveston;
And could my crown's revenue bring him back,
I would freely give it to his enemies,
And think I gain'd, having bought so dear a friend.

ISABELLA

Hark! how he harps³ upon his minion.

EDWARD

My heart is as an anvil unto sorrow,
Which beats upon it like the Cyclops' hammers⁴,
And with the noise turns up⁵ my giddy⁶ brain,
And makes me frantic for my Gaveston.
Ah! had some bloodless Fury⁷ rose from hell,
And with my kingly sceptre struck me dead,
When I was forc'd to leave my Gaveston!

ISABELLA

My gracious lord, I come to bring you news.

EDWARD

That you have parley'd⁸ with your Mortimer!

ISABELLA

That Gaveston, my lord, shall be repeal'd.

EDWARD

Repeal'd! The news is too sweet to be true.

ISABELLA

But will you love me, if you find it so?

EDWARD

If it be so, what will not Edward do?

- 1 a golden tongue: a piece of golden jewelry shaped like a serpent's tongue and inlaid with fine jewels.
- 2 these: referring to Edward's arms
- 3 bespeak: speak to
- 4 requite: repay
- 5 Great Alexander loved Hephaestion: Alexander the Great had an intimate friendship with the military commander Hephaestion
- 6 The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept: the same myth referenced on p.4

ISABELLA

For Gaveston, but not for Isabel.

EDWARD

For thee, fair queen, if thou lov'st Gaveston.
I'll hang a golden tongue¹ about thy neck,
Seeing thou hast pleaded with so good success.

EDWARD kisses ISABELLA

ISABELLA

No other jewels hang about my neck
Than these², my lord; nor let me have more wealth
Than I may fetch from this rich treasury.
O how a kiss revives poor Isabel!

EDWARD

Once more receive my hand; and let this be
A second marriage 'twixt thyself and me.

ISABELLA

And may it prove more happy than the first!
My gentle lord, bespeak³ these nobles fair,
That wait attendance for a gracious look,
And on their knees salute your majesty.

The NOBLES salute EDWARD

Now is the King of England rich and strong,
Having the love of his renowned peers.

EDWARD

Ay, Isabel, ne'er was my heart so light.
Now let us in, and feast it royally.
Until our friend the Earl of Cornwall comes,
Spare no cost; we will requite⁴ your love.

Exeunt [all, except MORTIMER and KENT]

[Scene 4.9]

KENT

Thou seest by nature he is mild and calm,
The mightiest kings have had their minions:
Great Alexander loved Hephestion⁵;
The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept⁶;

- 1 for Patroclus stern Achilles drooped: Achilles murdered Hector in the Trojan Wars after Patroclus, his closest friend, was killed
- 2 The Roman Tully lov'd Octavius: Marcus Tullius Cicero was a Roman statesman, and it is implied here that Octavius Caesar and he were intimately close
- 3 Grave Socrates, wild Alcibiades: Alcibiades was a pupil of Socrates' who was known for his looks
- 4 vain: devoid of value; trivial; conceited
- 5 light-headed: frivolous; thoughtless; fickle
- 6 riper years: older age
- 7 wean: slowly separate; remove gradually
- 8 toys: trifles; things of little importance
- 9 sovereign: supreme ruler of a people or country under monarchical government; a king or queen
- 10 pert: outspoken; lively
- 11 lord's revenue: the taxes and rent collected by a lord; i.e. he has a lord's wealth but should not be a lord
- 12 Midas-like: like King Midas, who was able to turn anything he touched to gold
- 13 jets it: struts
- 14 cullions: low born people
- 15 liveries: clothes
- 16 Proteus, god of shapes: god who had the ability to change shape
- 17 flout: mock
- 18 jest: ridicule; scoff at

And for Patroclus stern Achilles drooped¹
And not kings only, but the wisest men:
The Roman Tully lov'd Octavius²;
Grave Socrates, wild Alcibiades³.
Then let his grace, whose youth is flexible,
And promiseth as much as we can wish,
Freely enjoy that vain⁴, light-headed⁵ earl;
For riper years⁶ will wean⁷ him from such toys⁸.

MORTIMER

Good Kent, his wanton humour grieves not me;
But this I scorn, that one so basely born
Should by his sovereign⁹'s favour grow so pert¹⁰,
And riot it with the treasure of the realm.
While soldiers mutiny for want of pay,
He wears a lord's revenue¹¹ on his back,
And Midas-like¹², he jets it¹³ in the court,
With base outlandish cullions¹⁴ at his heels,
Whose proud fantastic liveries¹⁵ make such show
As if that Proteus, god of shapes¹⁶, appear'd.
While others walk below, the king and he
From out a window laugh at such as we,
And flout¹⁷ our train, and jest¹⁸ at our attire.
Edmund, 'tis this that makes me impatient.

KENT

But maybe now you see the King has changed.

MORTIMER

Then so am I, and live to do him service;

Exeunt KENT

But whiles I have a sword, a hand, a heart,
I will not yield to any such upstart.

Exeunt

- 1 Danae [ˈdanai]: from classical mythology, she was locked in a tower by her father after a prophecy stated that her son would murder him; later she was visited by Jupiter and gave birth to Perseus
- 2 brazen: made of brass
- 3 wax'd: grew
- 4 fare: go
- 5 irksome: annoying
- 6 preventeth: anticipates
- 7 nip: pinched; i.e. biting cold wind pinching or stinging the skin
- 8 painted: colorful; flowery
- 9 “Welcome, Lord Chamberlain!... Master Secretary!”: all addresses here are insultingly sarcastic.

ACT II

[Scene 6.1]

Enter EDWARD, ISABELLA, LANCASTER, MORTIMER, WARWICK, KENT, SPENCER

Enter GAVESTON

EDWARD

My Gaveston! Welcome to thy friend!
Thy absence made me droop and pine away;
For, as the lovers of fair Danae¹,
When she was lock'd up in a brazen² tower,
Desired her more, and wax'd³ outrageous,
So did it fare⁴ with me; and now thy sight
Is sweeter far than was thy parting hence
Bitter and irksome⁵ to my sobbing heart.

GAVESTON

Sweet lord and king, your speech preventeth⁶ mine,
Yet have I words left to express my joy:
The shepherd nipt⁷ with biting winter's rage
Frolics not more to see the painted⁸ spring,
Than I do to behold your majesty.

EDWARD

Will none of you salute my Gaveston?

LANCASTER

Salute him? Yes. Welcome, Lord Chamberlain!
Welcome is the good Earl of Cornwall!

WARWICK

Welcome, Lord Governor of the Isle of Man!

MORTIMER

Welcome, Master Secretary⁹!

EDWARD

Proud Mortimer! Ungentle Lancaster!
Is this the love you bear your sovereign?

ISABELLA

Sweet husband, be content, they all love you.

EDWARD

They love me not that hate my Gaveston.

- 1 Return it to their throats: reject their abuse
- 2 warrant: protector
- 3 Base, leaden: it's a pun on the gold coin, called a noble, implying that the nobles are just cheap metal pretending to be gold
- 4 Your tenant's beef: an insult implying that the nobles are stupid, or 'beef-witted'
- 5 mounting: rising
- 6 disdain: scorn; think beneath (oneself)
- 7 salve: atone; remedy
- 8 aby: pay for; atone
- 9 riotous: amoral
- 10 the block: The piece of wood on which the condemned were beheaded or mutilated.
- 11 sure: safe

GAVESTON

My lord, I cannot brook these injuries.

EDWARD

Return it to their throats¹, I'll be thy warrant².

GAVESTON

Base, leaden³ ears, that glory in your birth,
Go sit at home and eat your tenants' beef⁴;
And come not here to scoff at Gaveston,
Whose mounting⁵ thoughts did never creep so low
As to bestow a look on such as you.

LANCASTER

Yet I disdain⁶ not to do this for you.

[Grabs GAVESTON.]

EDWARD

Treason! Treason!

GAVESTON

The life of thee shall salve⁷ this foul disgrace.

MORTIMER

Villain! thy life, unless I miss mine aim.

[Throws GAVESTON to the ground]

ISABELLA

Ah! Furious Mortimer, what hast thou done?

MORTIMER

No more than I would answer, were he slain.

[Exit GAVESTON, with ISABELLA]

[Scene 6.2]

EDWARD

Yes, more than thou canst answer, though he live.
Dear shall you both aby⁸ this riotous⁹ deed.
Out of my presence! Come not near the court.

MORTIMER

I'll not be barr'd the court for Gaveston.

LANCASTER

We'll hale him by the ears unto the block¹⁰.

EDWARD

Look to your own heads; his is sure¹¹ enough.

WARWICK

Look to your own crown, if you back him thus.

- 1 ill beseem thy years: you should be wiser, considering your age
- 2 cross: obstruct
- 3 high looks: lofty goals
- 4 idle: useless; trifling; unimportant
- 5 lascivious: lewd; wanton; overtly sexual
- 6 prodigal: extravagant
- 7 drawn: emptied; drained
- 8 murmuring commons: disgruntled common people
- 9 overstretched: created an intolerable strain
- 10 sort: group
- 11 Valois: King Philip of France
- 12 forlorn: desolate; abandoned
- 13 naked: destitute
- 14 bereft: robbed of
- 15 Libels: subversive pamphlets
- 16 Ballads and rhymes: the cheapest and simplest form of literature
- 17 players: actors
- 18 garish: vulgarly bright; gaudy
- 19 Bedaub'd: clumsily ornamented
- 20 spangled: covered in spangles; sparkly
- 21 crest: plume on the top of a helmet
- 22 oft: often

KENT

Warwick, these words do ill beseem thy years¹.

EDWARD

Nay, all of them conspire to cross² me thus;
But if I live, I'll tread upon their heads
That think with high looks³ thus to tread me down.

MORTIMER

My lord, the family of the Mortimers
Are not so poor, but, would they sell their land,
'Twould levy men enough to anger you.
The idle⁴ triumphs, masks, lascivious⁵ shows,
And prodigal⁶ gifts bestow'd on Gaveston,
Have drawn⁷ thy treasury dry, and made thee weak;
The murmuring commons⁸, overstretched⁹, break.
Look for rebellion, look to be depos'd.
Who loves thee, but a sort¹⁰ of flatterers?

LANCASTER

Thy gentle queen, sole sister to Valois¹¹,
Complains that thou hast left her all forlorn¹².

MORTIMER

Thy court is naked¹³, being bereft¹⁴ of those
That make a king seem glorious to the world;
I mean the peers, whom thou should'st dearly love.
Libels¹⁵ are cast against thee in the street;
Ballads¹⁶ and rhymes made of thy overthrow.
When wert thou in the field with banner spread,
But once? and then thy soldiers marched like players¹⁷,
With garish¹⁸ robes, not armour; and thyself,
Bedaub'd¹⁹ with gold, rode laughing at the rest,
Nodding and shaking of thy spangled²⁰ crest²¹.
Look next to see us with our ensigns spread

Exit NOBLES
[Scene 6.3]

EDWARD

My swelling heart for very anger breaks!
How oft²² have I been baited by these peers,
And dare not be reveng'd, for their power is great!

- 1 cockerels: roosters
- 2 crowing of these cockerels: proverbial, the lion was afraid of the rooster's crowing
- 3 tyrannous: inclined to absolute sovereignty, almost like dictatorship
- 4 rue: regret
- 5 I walk with him about the walls: I wander the castle with him
- 6 begirt: surround; enclose
- 7 jars: quarrels; arguments

Yet, shall the crowing of these cockerels^{1,2}
Affright a lion? Edward, unfold thy paws,
And let their lives' blood slake thy fury's hunger.
If I be cruel and grow tyrannous³,
Now let them thank themselves, and rue⁴ too late.

KENT

My lord, I see your love to Gaveston
Will be the ruin of the realm and you,
For now the wrathful nobles threaten wars,
And therefore, brother, banish him forever.

EDWARD

Art thou an enemy to my Gaveston?

KENT

Ay, and it grieves me that I favoured him.

EDWARD

Traitor, begone! Whine thou with Mortimer.

KENT

So will I, rather than with Gaveston.

EDWARD

Out of my sight, and trouble me no more!

KENT

No marvel though thou scorn thy noble peers,
When I thy brother am rejected thus.

EDWARD

Away!

Exit KENT
[Scene 6.4]

Poor Gaveston, that has no friend but me,
And, so I walk with him about the walls⁵,
What care I though the earls begirt⁶ us round?
Here comes she that is cause of all these jars⁷.

Enter QUEEN ISABELLA with GAVESTON

[Scene 6.5]

- 1 dissemble: pretend; i.e. pretend to like her and speak nicely to her
- 2 stomach me: resent me; take offense to me
- 3 list: choose
- 4 Have at: attack
- 5 complices: accomplices, those who fight on their side
- 6 sent of policy: sent under false pretenses; sent to deceive

ISABELLA

My lord, 'tis thought the earls are up in arms.

EDWARD

Ay, and 'tis likewise thought you favour 'em.

ISABELLA

Thus do you still suspect me without cause?

GAVESTON

My lord, dissemble¹ with her, speak her fair.

EDWARD

Pardon me, sweet, I forgot myself.

ISABELLA

Your pardon is quickly got of Isabel.

EDWARD

The younger Mortimer is grown so brave,
That to my face he threatens civil wars.

GAVESTON

Why do you not commit him to the Tower?

EDWARD

I dare not, for the people love him well.

GAVESTON

I know, my lord, many will stomach me²,
But I respect neither their love nor hate.

EDWARD

The headstrong barons shall not limit me;
He that I list³ to favour shall be great.
Come, let's away; and when the feasting ends,
Have at⁴ the rebels, and their 'complices'⁵!

Exeunt

[Scene 7.1]

Enter KENT, LANCASTER, MORTIMER, WARWICK

KENT

My lords, of love to this our native land
I come to join with you and leave the king;

LANCASTER

I fear me, you are sent of policy⁶,

- 1 cast: reckon; fear
- 2 Plantagenet: a member of the royal family who was in power from Henry II to Richard III (1154-1485)
- 3 frolics: makes merry; also has sexual connotations
- 4 hardy: bold; reckless; *related to "foolhardy"*
- 5 "Which swept... Mortimer": implying that the Mortimer family came was connected with the Crusades which crossed the Dead Sea, which is called *Mortuum Mare* in Latin. The Mortimers were actually from the French city of Mortemer, in Normandy
- 6 alarum: call to arms; battle-cry
- 7 sport: idle pastimes; amusements
- 8 knell: sound of a bell, *esp.* sounded slowly immediately after a death.
- 9 have got the hold: have taken the fortress

To undermine us with a show of love.

WARWICK

He is your brother, therefore have we cause
To cast¹ the worst, and doubt of your revolt.

KENT

Mine honour shall be hostage of my truth;
If that will not suffice, farewell, my lords.

MORTIMER

Stay, Edmund; never was Plantagenet²
False to his word, and therefore trust we thee.

KENT

Now, my lords, know this,
That Gaveston here frolics³ with the king.
Let us with these our followers scale the walls,
And suddenly surprise them unawares.

MORTIMER

I'll give the onset.

WARWICK

And I'll follow thee.

LANCASTER

None be so hardy⁴ as to touch the king;
But neither spare you Gaveston nor his friends.

MORTIMER

This tattered ensign of my ancestors
Which swept the desert shore of that dead sea
Whereof we got the name of Mortimer⁵,
Will I advance upon these castle-walls.
Drums, strike alarum⁶, raise them from their sport⁷,
And ring aloud the knell⁸ of Gaveston!

Exeunt

[Scene 8.1]

Enter KING EDWARD, QUEEN ISABELLA, GAVESTON

ISABELLA

Fly, fly, my lords, the earls have got the hold⁹;

- 1 “from my embraces...”: i.e. he won't let me near him, he won't let me embrace him.
- 2 mollify: soften

GAVESTON

O stay, my lord, they will not injure you.

EDWARD

I will not trust them; Gaveston, away!

GAVESTON

Farewell, my lord.

EDWARD

Farewell, sweet Gaveston;

ISABELLA

No farewell to poor Isabel, thy queen?

EDWARD

Yes, yes, for Mortimer, your lover's sake.

Exeunt all but QUEEN ISABELLA

[Scene 8.2]

ISABELLA

From my embracements¹ thus he breaks away.
O that mine arms could close this isle about,
That I might pull him to me where I would!
Or that these tears that drizzle from mine eyes
Had power to mollify² his stony heart,
That when I had him we might never part.

Enter LANCASTER, WARWICK, MORTIMER

[Scene 8.3]

LANCASTER

I wonder how he scap'd!

MORTIMER

Who's this? The queen!

ISABELLA

Ay, Mortimer, the miserable queen,
Whose body with continual mourning wasted:
These hands are tir'd with haling of my lord
From Gaveston, from wicked Gaveston,
And all in vain; for, when I speak him fair,
He turns away, and smiles upon his minion.

- 1 train: group of people accompanying a nobleman
- 2 Foreslow: waste
- 3 importune: consistently ask or request something of someone; beg
- 4 strange: estranged; unresponsive

MORTIMER

Cease to lament, and tell us where's the king?

ISABELLA

What would you with the king? Is't him you seek?

LANCASTER

No, madam, but that cursed Gaveston.
Far be it from the thought of Lancaster
To offer violence to his sovereign.
We would but rid the realm of Gaveston:
Tell us where he remains, and he shall die.

ISABELLA

He's gone that way.
Pursue him quickly, and he cannot 'scape;
The king hath left him, and his train¹ is small.

WARWICK

Foreslow² no time, sweet Lancaster; let's march.

MORTIMER

Madam, stay you within this castle here.

ISABELLA

No, Mortimer, I'll to my lord the king.
You know the king is so suspicious,
As if he hear I have but talk'd with you,
Mine honour will be call'd in question;
And therefore, gentle Mortimer, be gone.

MORTIMER

Madam, I cannot stay to answer you,
But think of Mortimer as he deserves.

Exeunt all except QUEEN ISABELLA

[Scene 8.4]

ISABELLA

So well hast thou deserv'd sweet Mortimer,
As Isabel could live with thee for ever!
In vain I look for love at Edward's hand,
Whose eyes are fix'd on none but Gaveston;
Yet once more I'll importune³ him with prayers.
If he be strange⁴ and not regard my words,
Then I will go and escape into France,

- 1 'larums: alarums
- 2 unsurpris'd: unambushed
- 3 malgrado: in spite of
- 4 malgrado all your beards: in direct opposition to your purposes
- 5 broils: battles
- 6 welter: roll around (in)
- 7 so much honour: members of nobility were exempt from hanging, so they are telling Gaveston he has no such exemption

And to the king my brother there complain,
How Gaveston hath robb'd me of his love:
But yet I hope my sorrows will have end,
And Gaveston this blessed day be slain.

Exit

[Scene 9.1]

Enter GAVESTON, pursued

GAVESTON

Yet, lusty lords, I have escap'd your hands,
Your threats, your 'larums¹, and your hot pursuits;
And though divorced from King Edward's eyes,
Yet liveth Pierce of Gaveston unsurpris'd²,
Breathing, in hope (*malgrado*³ all your beards⁴,
That muster rebels thus against your king),
To see his royal sovereign once again.

Enter [WARWICK, LANCASTER, MORTIMER, Soldiers]

MORTIMER

Thou proud disturber of thy country's peace,
Corrupter of thy king, cause of these broils⁵,
Base flatterer, yield! and were it not for shame,
Shame and dishonour to a soldier's name,
Upon my weapon's point here should'st thou fall,
And welter⁶ in thy gore.

LANCASTER

Monster of men!

Look for no other fortune, wretch, than death!
King Edward is not here to buckler thee.

WARWICK

Lancaster, why talk'st thou to the slave?

GAVESTON

My lord!

WARWICK

But for thou wert the favourite of a king,
Thou shalt have so much honour⁷ at our hands

- 1 heading: beheading
- 2 heading is one, and hanging is the other: the only options are being hanged or beheaded
- 3 death is all: death is the same whether beheaded or hanged
- 4 malice: desire to do harm
- 5 Inexorable: unable to be persuaded; rigid; unmoving
- 6 recreants: breakers of allegiance
- 7 Eleanor of Spain: Queen Eleanor, Edward II's mother and King Edward I's first wife.
- 8 Longshanks: nickname for King Edward I, because of his height
- 9 braves: defiant insults
- 10 beard: defy with shameless audacity
- 11 magnanimity: courage; fortitude

GAVESTON

I thank you all, my lords: then I perceive,
That heading¹ is one, and hanging is the other²,
And death is all³.

GAVESTON dies

Act III

[Scene 11]

Enter KING EDWARD

EDWARD

I long to hear an answer from the barons
Touching my friend, my dearest Gaveston.
Oh, God! Not the riches of my realm
Can ransom him! Ah, he is mark'd to die!
I know the malice⁴ of the younger Mortimer,
Warwick I know is rough, and Lancaster
Inexorable⁵, and I shall never see
My lovely Pierce, my Gaveston again!

Enter SPENCER

[Scene 11.2]

EDWARD

What, my Spencer! Dost thou come alone?

SPENCER

Yea, my good lord, for Gaveston is dead.

EDWARD

Ah, traitors! have they put my friend to death?

SPENCER

Proud recreants⁶!
Were I King Edward, England's sovereign,
Son to the lovely Eleanor of Spain,
Great Edward Longshanks⁸ issue, would I bear
These braves⁹, this rage, and suffer uncontroll'd
These barons thus to beard¹⁰ me in my land,
In mine own realm? My lord, pardon my speech:
Did you retain your father's magnanimity¹¹,
Did you regard the honour of your name,
You would not suffer thus your majesty

- 1 counterbuff'd: opposed by
- 2 preach on: reference to beheading, meaning the heads will "preach" or "speak" that they are traitors
- 3 preachments: sermons; also a play on words with "preach on"
- 4 steel: i.e. sharpen his sword
- 5 poll their tops: i.e. cut off their heads, a reference like "preach on"
- 6 moving orbs thereof: the planets and Sun, which were thought to revolve around the Earth as concentric spheres
- 7 father's sword: the sword was wielded by monarchs and handed down through family lines
- 8 'longing: belonging
- 9 quaff: drink deeply; i.e. that you will fill yourself by drinking blood
- 10 royal standard: the distinctive symbol of a royal family, usually displayed on a flag in battle
- 11 my bloody colours: both a reference to the literal blood from battle, as well as to the fact that the royal coat of arms was a golden lion on a red background
- 12 progeny: lineage
- 13 merely of our love: i.e. not because of birthright, only because of the love between Edward and Spencer
- 14 Despite: in spite of
- 15 haught: haughty; lofty
- 16 becomes: suits; benefits
- 17 affection: desire; will
- 18 aw'd: feared; i.e. treated in a delicate way to not disturb but still teach and control
- 19 govern'd: controlled

Be counterbuff'd¹ of your nobility.
Strike off their heads, and let them preach on² poles!
No doubt, such lessons they will teach the rest,
As by their preachments³ they will profit much,
And learn obedience to their lawful king.

EDWARD

Yea, gentle Spencer, we have been too mild,
Too kind to them; but now have drawn our sword.
We'll steel⁴ it on their crest, and poll their tops⁵.
By earth, the common mother of us all,
By Heaven, and all the moving orbs thereof⁶,
By this right hand, and by my father's sword⁷,
And all the honours 'longing⁸ to my crown,
I will have heads, and lives for him, as many
As I have manors, castles, towns, and towers!
Traucherous Warwick! traitorous Mortimer!
If I be England's king, in lakes of gore
Your headless trunks, your bodies will I trail,
That you may drink your fill, and quaff⁹ in blood,
And stain my royal standard¹⁰ with the same,
That so my bloody colours¹¹ may suggest
Remembrance of revenge immortally
On your accursed traitorous progeny¹²,
You villains, that have slain my Gaveston!
And in this place of honour and of trust,
Spencer, sweet Spencer, I adopt thee here:
And merely of our love¹³ we do create thee
Earl of Gloucester, and Lord Chamberlain,
Despite¹⁴ of times, despite of enemies.

SPENCER

This haught¹⁵ resolve becomes¹⁶ your majesty,
Not to be tied to their affection¹⁷,
As though your highness were a schoolboy still,
And must be aw'd¹⁸ and govern'd¹⁹ like a child.
My lord, here comes the queen.

Enter QUEEN ISABELLA
[Scene 11.3]

- 1 homage: formal and public acknowledgement of allegiance; obligation to service
- 2 Slack in homage: i.e. the King has not been sending money to France
- 3 once: once and for all
- 4 iwis: assuredly
- 5 ranker: more insolent; more arrogant
- 6 rout: unruly crowd

EDWARD

Madam, what news?

ISABELLA

News of dishonour, lord, and discontent.
I learn, my lord, by letters and by words,
That Lord Valois our brother, King of France,
Because your highness hath been slack in homage^{1,2},
Hath seized Normandy into his hands.

EDWARD

Valois and I will soon be friends again.
But to my Gaveston; shall I never see,
Never behold thee now! Madam, in this matter,
We will employ you being his sister.
You shall go parley with the King of France.

ISABELLA

Unnatural wars, where subjects brave their king;
God end them once³! My lords, I take my leave,
To make my preparation for France.

Exit ISABELLA

[Scene 11.4]

SPENCER

My lord, here's a message from the barons.
Desires access unto your majesty.

EDWARD

Let me hear.

SPENCER

Long live King Edward, England's lawful lord!

EDWARD

So wish not they, iwis⁴, that sent this hither.
Thou com'st from Mortimer and his 'complices,
A ranker⁵ rout⁶ of rebels never was.
Well, say their message.

SPENCER

The barons up in arms, in this salute
Your highness with long life and happiness;
Say they; and lovingly advise your grace,
To cherish virtue and nobility,

- 1 old servitors: long-standing domestic attendants
- 2 smooth: plausible; obedient
- 3 consecrate: make sacred
- 4 tarry: wait for
- 5 Hie: hurry
- 6 swell: grow proud
- 7 make them stoop: humiliate them
- 8 countermand: oppose
- 9 prevail: be successful

And have old servitors¹ in high esteem,
And shake off smooth² dissembling flatterers.
This granted, they, their honours, and their lives,
Are to your highness vow'd and consecrate³.

SPENCER

Ah, traitors! will they still display their pride?

EDWARD

Away, tarry⁴ no answer.
Rebels, will they appoint their sovereign
His⁵ sports, his pleasures, and his company?
Yet, let these men see how I do divorce
Spencer from me.

Embraces SPENCER.

Now get thee to thy lords,
And tell them I will come to chastise them
For murdering Gaveston; hie thee, get thee gone!
Edward with fire and sword follows at thy heels.

[Exit Herald.]

My lord, perceive you how these rebels swell⁶?
Soldiers, good hearts, defend your sovereign's right,
For now, even now, we march to make them stoop⁷.
Away!

Exeunt.

Alarums, excursions, a great fight, and a retreat

[Scene 12.1]

[Battlefield at Boroughbridge in Yorkshire]
Re-enter KING EDWARD and SPENCER

EDWARD

Why do we sound retreat? Upon them, lords!
This day I shall pour vengeance with my sword
On those proud rebels that are up in arms
And do confront and countermand⁸ their king.

SPENCER

I doubt it not, my lord, right will prevail⁹.
Here come the rebels.

- 1 yonder: over there
- 2 smite: strike; hit
- 3 betimes: in good time
- 4 Traitor on thy face: i.e. you are the traitor, Lancaster
- 5 upstart: one who suddenly has new power
- 6 trow: know; think
- 7 satisfy: atone; make amends
- 8 pernicious: harmful; dangerous; evil

Enter MORTIMER, LANCASTER, WARWICK and others.
[Scene 12.2]

MORTIMER

Look, Lancaster, yonder¹ is Edward
Among his flatterers.

LANCASTER

And there let him be
Till he pay dearly for his company.

WARWICK

And shall, or Warwick's sword shall smite² in vain.

EDWARD

What, rebels, do you shrink and sound retreat?

MORTIMER

No, Edward, no; thy flatterers faint and fly.

LANCASTER

Thou'd best betimes³ forsake thee, and their trains,
For they'll betray thee, traitors as they are.

SPENCER

Traitor on thy face⁴, rebellious Lancaster!

WARWICK

Away, base upstart⁵, bravest thou nobles thus?

SPENCER

A noble attempt and honourable deed,
Is it not, trow⁶ ye, to assemble aid,
And levy arms against your lawful king!

EDWARD

For which ere long their heads shall satisfy⁷,
To appease the wrath of their offended king.

MORTIMER

Then, Edward, thou wilt fight it to the last,
And rather bathe thy sword in subjects' blood,
Than banish that pernicious⁸ company?

WARWICK

Alarum! To the fight!

[Alarums. Exeunt the two parties severally.]

- 1 Vail'd: lowered
- 2 advance: i.e. raise their severed heads on spikes
- 3 knit: fastened together; i.e. you nobles who knew that Gaveston and I were inseparable
- 4 in regard of: out of consideration
- 5 It is but temporal that thou canst inflict: the suffering is only physical, not spiritual and thus eternal
- 6 The worst is death: reference to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, "The worst is death, and death will have his day" (III.ii.99)
- 7 "better to die... in infamy": proverbial, i.e. it is preferable to die rather than to live with Edward II as king
- 8 roundly: without hesitation

[Scene 13.1]

Enter KING EDWARD, SPENCER, and, LANCASTER, WARWICK, and KENT (captives)

EDWARD

Now, lusty lords, now, not by chance of war,
But justice of the quarrel and the cause,
Vail'd¹ is your pride; methinks you hang the heads,
But we'll advance² them, traitors. Now 'tis time
To be avenged on you for all your braves,
And for the murder of my dearest friend,
To whom right well you knew our soul was knit³,
Good Pierce of Gaveston, my sweet favourite.
Ah, rebels! recreants! you made him away.

KENT

Brother, in regard of⁴ thee, and of thy land,
Did they remove that flatterer from thy throne.

EDWARD

So, sir, you have spoke; away, avoid our presence.

[KENT steps aside]

[Scene 13.2]

WARWICK

Tyrant, I scorn thy threats and menaces;
It is but temporal that thou canst inflict⁵.

LANCASTER

The worst is death⁶, and better die to live
Than live in infamy⁷ under such a king.

EDWARD

These lusty leaders, Warwick and Lancaster,
I charge you roundly⁸ off with both their heads!
Away!

WARWICK

Farewell, vain world!

LANCASTER

Sweet Mortimer, farewell.

- 1 Sound drums and trumpets: i.e. celebrate victory
- 2 gentle gale: non-stormy breeze; also implies courtesy or generosity in this case
- 3 looseness: carelessness; incompetence; may also refer to sexual misconduct

WARWICK

England, unkind to thy nobility,
Groan for this grief, behold how thou art maim'd!

EDWARD

Go Kent, take your leave; and for the rest,
Do speedy execution on them both.
Begone!

[The captive Barons are led off.]

EDWARD.

Sound drums and trumpets¹! March with me, my friends,
Edward this day hath crown'd him king anew.

Exeunt all except KENT

Act IV

[Scene 14.1]

KENT

Fair blows the wind for France; blow gentle gale²,
Till Edmund be arriv'd for England's good!
Nature, yield to my country's cause in this.
To Isabel, the queen, that now in France
Makes friends, to cross the seas with our French friends,
To find that Mortimer who is still free,
And step into my brother's regiment.
A brother? No, a butcher of thy friends!
Proud Edward, dost thou banish me thy presence?
But I'll to France, and cheer the wronged queen,
And certify what Edward's looseness³ is.
Unnatural king! to slaughter noblemen
And cherish flatterers!

Exeunt

[Scene 15]

Enter EDWARD and SPENCER, projected

- 1 bark'd: embarked; left here
- 2 apace: swiftly; quickly
- 3 love England's gold: i.e. Edward's bribe was successful
- 4 'A: he
- 5 twain: the two; the last was the truest of the two things you said; Mortimer is saying he was near his death
- 6 hap: fortune
- 7 thraldom: servitude; bondage; imprisonment

EDWARD

Thus after many threats of wrathful war,
Triumpheth England's Edward with his friends;
And triumph, Edward, with his friends uncontroll'd!
My lord of Gloucester, do you hear the news?

SPENCER

What news, my lord?

EDWARD

Why, man, they say there is great execution
They bark'd¹ apace² a month ago:
Now, on my life, they'll neither bark nor bite.

In France, Enter ISABELLA, on stage

ISABELLA

Ay me! Our friends do fail us all in France;
The lords are cruel and the king unkind.
What shall we do?

EDWARD

Now, sir, the news from France? Gloucester, I trow
The lords of France love England's gold³ so well
As Isabella gets no aid from thence.

Enter KENT and MORTIMER

KENT

Madam, long may you live,
Much happier than your friends in England do!

ISABELLA

Lord Edmund and Lord Mortimer alive!

EDWARD

What now remains? Have you proclaim'd, my lord,
Reward for them can bring in Mortimer?

SPENCER

My lord, we have; and if he be in England,
'A⁴ will be had ere long, I doubt it not.

ISABELLA

Welcome to France! The news was here, my lord,
That you were dead, or very near your death.

MORTIMER

Lady, the last was truest of the twain⁵;
But Mortimer, reserv'd for better hap⁶,
Hath shaken off the thraldom⁷ of the tyrant,

- 1 the king: here the King of France
- 2 makes room: makes way
- 3 want: are required
- 4 faction: an organized dissenting group
- 5 reclaim'd: subdued
- 6 deserv'd: earned
- 7 "to bid our righteous cause a base": i.e. to gain financial and moral support for our cause
- 8 gone associate: allied with

And lives t'advance your standard, my good queen.

ISABELLA

But, gentle lords, friendless we are in France.

MORTIMER

Indeed, madam, a noble friend of yours,

Told us, at our arrival, all the news:

How hard the nobles, how unkind the king¹

Hath show'd himself; but, madam, right makes room²

Where weapons want³; and, though a many friends

Are made away, as Warwick, Lancaster,

And others of our party and faction⁴;

Yet have we friends, assure your grace, in England.

EDWARD is handed letters from off screen

EDWARD

How now, what news with thee? From whence come these?

SPENCER

Letters, my lord, and tidings forth of France;

KENT

Would all were well, and Edward well reclaim'd⁵,

For England's honour, peace, and quietness.

MORTIMER

But by the sword, my lord, 't must be deserv'd⁶;

The king will ne'er forsake his flatterers.

ISABELLA

My lords of England, since th' ungentle king

Of France refuseth to give aid of arms

To this distressed queen, his sister here,

Go you with me to England. Doubt ye not,

We will find comfort, money, men, and friends

Ere long, to bid our righteous cause a base⁷.

MORTIMER

Madam, along, and you, my lord, with me,

That England's peers may hero's welcome see.

Exeunt.

EDWARD

Ah, villains! Hath that Mortimer escap'd?

With him is Edmund gone associate⁸?

And will my Queen betray me soundly thus?

- 1 Phoebus: the god Apollo, who controlled the Sun by driving across the sky in his golden chariot
- 2 dusky night, in rusty iron car: reference to another of Marlowe's plays, "ugly Darkness with her rusty coach," which juxtaposes with the image of Phoebus Apollo's golden chariot.
- 3 injurious: harmful
- 4 prosperous: favorable
- 5 Belgia: the Low Countries, a coastal region in the west of Europe which contains Belgium and the Netherlands
- 6 cope: engage in battle
- 7 friends: relatives
- 8 case: deed
- 9 glaive: could refer to spear, battle-axe/spear hybrid (called a halberd), or broadsword
- 10 civil broils: civil wars
- 11 help: remedy
- 12 Misgoverned: unruly
- 13 wrack: destruction
- 14 looseness: frivolous, careless behavior
- 15 fealty: loyalty
- 16 wreak: avenge
- 17 withal: in addition to all; moreover
- 18 havoc: devastation; destruction
- 19 havocs England's wealth and treasury: i.e. wastes the country's money on frivolous and extravagant things

England shall welcome you and all your rout.
Gallop apace, bright Phoebus¹, through the sky,
And dusky night, in rusty iron car²,
Between you both shorten the time, I pray,
That I may see that most desired day
When we may meet these traitors in the field.
Come now to that field, there to make us strong;
And, winds, as equal be to bring them in,
As you injurious³ were to bear them forth!

[Exeunt.]

[Scene 17.1]

ISABELLA

Now, lords, our loving friends and countrymen,
Welcome to England all, with prosperous⁴ winds!
Our kindest friends in Belgia⁵ have we left,
To cope⁶ with friends⁷ at home; a heavy case⁸
When force to force is knit, and sword and glaive⁹
In civil broils¹⁰ make kin and countrymen
Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides
With their own weapons gore! But what's the help¹¹?
Misgoverned¹² kings are cause of all this wrack¹³;
And, Edward, thou art one among them all,
Whose looseness¹⁴ hath betray'd thy land to spoil,
Who made the channels overflow with blood.

MORTIMER

All homage, fealty¹⁵, and forwardness;
And for the open wrongs and injuries
Edward hath done to us; his queen and land,
We come in arms to wreak¹⁶ it with the sword;
That England's queen in peace may repossess
Her dignities and honours; and withal¹⁷
We may remove these flatterers from the king,
That havoc¹⁸ England's wealth and treasury¹⁹.

ISABELLA

Sound trumpets, my lord, and forward let us march;
Edward will think we come to flatter him.

- 1 Fly: run
- 2 the queen is over-strong: i.e. the Queen is too powerful
- 3 Shape: steer
- 4 course to Ireland: i.e. head towards Ireland
- 5 reinforce: encourage
- 6 bed of honour: England
- 7 princely: *lit.* like a prince
- 8 aims at thy life: intends to kill you
- 9 forsooth: truthfully

KENT

I would he never had been flattered more.

[Scene 18.1]

Enter EDWARD and SPENCER, flying about the stage

SPENCER

Fly¹, fly, my lord! the queen is over-strong²;
Her friends do multiply, and yours do fail.
Shape³ we our course to Ireland⁴, there to breathe.

EDWARD

What! was I born to fly and run away,
And leave Mortimer's conquerors behind?
Give me my horse, and let's reinforce⁵ our troops:
And in this bed of honour⁶ die with fame.

SPENCER

O no, my lord, this princely⁷ resolution
Fits not the time; away! we are pursued.

[Exeunt.]

Enter KENT, with sword and target

[Scene 18.2]

KENT

This way he fled, but I am come too late
Edward, alas! my heart relents for thee.
Proud traitor, Mortimer, why dost thou chase
Thy lawful king, thy sovereign, with thy sword?
Vile wretch! and why hast thou, of all unkind,
Borne arms against thy brother and thy king?
Rain showers of vengeance on my cursed head,
Thou God, to whom in justice it belongs
To punish this unnatural revolt!
Edward, this Mortimer aims at thy life⁸!
O fly him, then! But, Edmund, calm this rage,
Dissemble, or thou diest; for Mortimer
And Isabel do kiss, while they conspire;
And yet she bears a face of love forsooth⁹.
Fie on that love that hatcheth death and hate!

Enter QUEEN ISABELLA and MORTIMER

- 1 controlment: control; i.e. she can't control that so why do you ask it
- 2 relenting: pitying
- 3 look to him: watch him
- 4 but late: just lately
- 5 whirlwind: a whirling or rotating wind, like a hurricane or tornado
- 6 started: forced out
- 7 resteth: remains to be done
- 8 in a muse: in thought

[Scene 18.3]

ISABELLA

Successful battle gives the God of kings
To them that fight in right and fear his wrath.
Since then successfully we have prevailed,
Thanked be Heaven's great architect, and you.

KENT

Madam, without offence, if I may ask,
How will you deal with Edward in his fall?

MORTIMER

My lord of Kent, what needs these questions?
'Tis not in her controlment¹, nor in ours,
But as the realm and parliament shall please,
So shall your brother be disposed of.
I like not this relenting² mood in Edmund. [*Aside to the QUEEN.*]
Madam, 'tis good to look to him³ betimes.
But where's the king and the other, Spencer, fled?

KENT

Spencer the son, created Earl of Gloucester,
Is shipped but late⁴ for Ireland with the king.

MORTIMER

Some whirlwind⁵ fetch them back or sink them all! [*Aside.*]
They shall be started⁶ thence, I doubt it not.

KENT

Madam, what resteth⁷? Why stand ye in a muse⁸?

ISABELLA

I rue my lord's ill-fortune; but alas!
Care of my country call'd me to this war.

MORTIMER

Madam, have done with care and sad complaint;
Your king hath wrong'd your country and himself,
And we must seek to right it as we may.

Exeunt.

[Scene 19.1]

Enter KING EDWARD and SPENCER

SPENCER

Have you no doubt, my lord; have you no fear;

- 1 suspect: suspicion
- 2 fell: cruel
- 3 “hadst thou ever... compassion of my state”: i.e. if you had ever been a king you would understand how hurt I am and you would sympathize
- 4 Whilom: formerly
- 5 pomp: splendor; magnificence
- 6 empery: dominion; power
- 7 nurseries of arts: places where arts are learned, i.e. Oxford and Cambridge Universities
- 8 Plato and from Aristotle: i.e. you learned the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle
- 9 life contemplative: a reference to the philosophy of St. Augustine’s *City of God* which juxtaposes the ‘active life’ and the ‘life contemplative,’ a way of life dedicated to contemplation
- 10 sore: harsh
- 11 tempests: storms
- 12 pine: suffer; endure pain
- 13 bloody: bloodthirsty
- 14 mickle: much
- 15 drowsiness: being drowsy or overtired was often considered a bad omen at the time
- 16 Betides: bodes; predicts

As silent and as careful we will be,
To keep your royal person safe with us,
Free from suspect¹ and fell² invasion
Of such as have your majesty in chase,
As danger of this stormy time requires.

EDWARD

O! hadst thou ever been a king, thy heart,
Pierced deeply with sense of my distress,
Could not but take compassion of my state³.
Stately and proud, in riches and in train,
Whilom⁴ I was powerful, and full of pomp⁵:
But what is he whom rule and empery⁶
Have not in life or death made miserable?
Come, Spencer; come, my friend, come sit down by me;
Make trial now of that philosophy,
That in our famous nurseries of arts⁷
Thou suck'dst from Plato and from Aristotle⁸.
Spencer, this life contemplative⁹ is Heaven.
O that I might this life in quiet lead!
But we, alas! are chas'd; and you, my friend,
Your life and my dishonour they pursue.

SPENCER

We were embark'd for Ireland, wretched we!
With awkward winds and with sore¹⁰ tempests¹¹ driven
To fall on shore, and here to pine¹² in fear
Of Mortimer and his confederates.

EDWARD

Mortimer! who talks of Mortimer?
Who wounds me with the name of Mortimer,
That bloody¹³ man? Good Spencer, on thy lap
Lay I this head, laden with mickle¹⁴ care.
O might I never open these eyes again!
Never again lift up this drooping head!
O never more lift up this dying heart!

SPENCER

My lord? My lord? -- This drowsiness¹⁵
Betides¹⁶ no good; here even we are betray'd.

Enter GURNEY & MATREVIS

- 1 no other name: i.e. none of the titles bestowed upon him by Edward II
- 2 high treason: criminal disloyalty against the state; *he is considered treasonous because he is against Mortimer, with Edward II*
- 3 Stand: assert; rely on
- 4 lour: frown
- 5 panting: beating rapidly, strongly, or irregularly
- 6 will: desire; *because it's the heavens the desires are inevitable*
- 7 storm: make a scene
- 8 My lot is cast: i.e. my fate is sealed
- 9 litter: a coach for one, carried by two men typically

[Scene 19.2]

GURNEY

Pathetic Spencer by no other name¹,
I do arrest you of high treason² here.
Stand³ not on titles, but obey the arrest;
'Tis in the name of Isabel the queen.

EDWARD

O day, the last of all my bliss on earth!
Centre of all misfortune! O my stars,
Why do you lour⁴ unkindly on a king?
Comes this man, then, in Isabella's name
To take my life, my company from me?
Here, man, rip up this panting⁵ breast of mine,
And take my heart in rescue of my friends!

MATREVIS

Away with him!

SPENCER

It may become thee yet
To let me take my farewell of his grace.

EDWARD

Spencer, ah, sweet Spencer, thus then must we part?

SPENCER

We must, my lord, so will⁶ the angry Heavens.

EDWARD

Nay, so will hell and cruel Mortimer;
The gentle Heavens have not to do in this.

SPENCER

My lord, it is in vain to grieve or storm⁷.
Here humbly of your grace I take my leave;
My lot is cast⁸; I fear me, so is thine.

EDWARD

In Heaven we may, in earth ne'er shall we meet:
And you sir, say, what shall become of us?

GURNEY

Your majesty must go with me right now.

EDWARD

Must! it is somewhat hard, when kings must go.

GURNEY

There is a litter⁹ ready for your grace,

- 1 That waits your pleasure, and the day grows old: i.e. it's getting late and you should leave soon
- 2 Pluto's bells: reference to Pluto, god of the underworld, and the death knell
- 3 Charon: ferryman on the river Styx, which was the river in the underworld across which the dead were transported
- 4 shorter by the head: i.e. he will be beheaded
- 5 feigned: false
- 6 weeds: clothes
- 7 all live to die, and rise to fall: i.e. with life comes death, and when you rise you are bound to fall
- 8 allay'd: diluted; abated

That waits your pleasure, and the day grows old¹.
MATREVIS

As good be gone, as stay and be benighted.

EDWARD

A litter hast thou? Lay me in a hearse,
And to the gates of hell convey me hence;
Let Pluto's bells² ring out my fatal knell,
And hags howl for my death at Charon³'s shore,
For friends hath Edward none but him,
And he must die under a tyrant's sword.

MATREVIS

My lord, be going; care not for him,
For I shall see him shorter by the head⁴.

EDWARD

Well, that shall be, shall be: part we must!
Sweet Spencer, good companion, part we must!
Hence feigned⁵ weeds⁶! unfeigned are my woes;
He stay'st for me,
And go I must. Life, farewell, with my friends.

[Exeunt KING EDWARD & GURNEY.]

[Scene 19.3]

SPENCER

O! is he gone? Is noble Edward gone?
Parted from hence, never to see me more?
Reduce we all our lessons unto this:
To die, sweet Spencer, therefore live we all;
Spencer, all live to die⁷, and rise to fall.

SPENCER is killed by MATREVIS

[Exeunt.]

ACT V

[Scene 20.1]

Enter KING EDWARD with MATREVIS and GOURNEY

MATREVIS

Be Patient, good my lord, cease to lament.

EDWARD

The griefs of private men are soon allay'd⁸,

- 1 “The forest deer... wounds”: the belief was that a wounded deer would eat a specific herb which would push out the arrow
- 2 mounts up: rises
- 3 dauntless: fearless; bold
- 4 curb: restrain; control
- 5 pent: shut up; imprisoned
- 6 mew’d: caged
- 7 cloy: weigh down
- 8 rancour: deep-rooted resentment; animosity
- 9 plain: complain
- 10 perfect: mere
- 11 cave of care: i.e. where you are keeping me; *likely ironic*
- 12 company: accompany
- 13 strange exchange: i.e. his position has been undermined, or “exchanged” and he is in a poor position for a King.
- 14 stay: await

But not of kings. The forest deer, being struck,
Runs to an herb that closeth up the wounds¹;
But, when the imperial lion's flesh is gored,
He rends and tears it with his wrathful paw,
And highly scorning that the lowly earth
Should drink his blood, mounts up² into the air.
And so it fares with me, whose dauntless³ mind
The ambitious Mortimer would seek to curb⁴,
And that unnatural queen, false Isabel,
That thus hath pent⁵ and mew'd⁶ me in a prison;
For such outrageous passions cloy⁷ my soul,
As with the wings of rancour⁸ and disdain,
Full often am I soaring up to Heaven,
To plain⁹ me to the gods against them both.
But when I call to mind I am a king,
Methinks I should revenge me of my wrongs,
That Mortimer and Isabel have done.
But what are kings, when regiment is gone,
But perfect¹⁰ shadows in a sunshine day?
My nobles rule, I bear the name of king;
I wear the crown, but am controll'd by them,
Whilst I am lodg'd within this cave of care¹¹,
Where sorrow at my elbow still attends,
To company¹² my heart with sad laments,
That bleeds within me for this strange exchange¹³.
But tell me, must I now resign my crown,
To make usurping Mortimer a king?

MATREVIS

Your grace mistakes; it is for England's good,

EDWARD

No, 'tis for Mortimer,

GOURNEY

My lord, why waste you thus the time away?

They stay¹⁴ your answer; will you yield your crown?

EDWARD

Ah, my friend, weigh how hardly I can brook
To lose my crown and kingdom without cause;
To give ambitious Mortimer my right,
That like a mountain overwhelms my bliss,

- 1 clime: region; realm
- 2 watches of the element: stars and planets; watches are four parts of night, and the element is the sky
- 3 rest you at a stay: don't move
- 4 tiger's milk: reference to the belief that people's personalities and morality was acquired via nursing and weaning. The tiger here implies cruelty
- 5 diadem: crown
- 6 fondly: foolishly
- 7 "they pass not for thy frowns": i.e. your frowns don't affect the people, they don't care about your feelings anymore
- 8 late: recently
- 9 martyred: tormented; long suffering

In which extreme my mind here murdered is.
But what the heavens appoint, I must obey!
Here, take my crown; the life of Edward too; [*Taking off the crown.*]
Two kings in England cannot reign at once.
But stay awhile, let me be king till night,
That I may gaze upon this glittering crown;
So shall my eyes receive their last content,
My head, the latest honour due to it,
And jointly both yield up their wished right.
Continue ever thou celestial sun;
Let never silent night possess this clime¹:
Stand still you watches of the element²;
All times and seasons, rest you at a stay³,
That Edward may be still fair England's king!
But day's bright beam doth vanish fast away,
And needs I must resign my wished crown.
Inhuman creatures! nurs'd with tiger's milk⁴!
Why gape you for your sovereign's overthrow!
My diadem⁵ I mean, and guiltless life.
See, monsters, see, I'll wear my crown again! [*He puts on the crown.*]
What, fear you not the fury of your king?
But, hapless Edward, thou art fondly⁶ led;
They pass not for thy frowns⁷ as late⁸ they did,
But seek to make a new-elected king;
Which fills my mind with strange despairing thoughts,
Which thoughts are martyred⁹ with endless torments,
And in this torment comfort find I none,
But that I feel the crown upon my head;
And therefore let me wear it yet awhile.

GOURNEY

My lord, the parliament must have present news,
And therefore say, will you resign or no? [*The KING rageth.*]

EDWARD

I'll not resign, but whilst I live be king.
Traitors, be gone and join with Mortimer!
Elect, conspire, install, do what you will:
Their blood and yours shall seal these treacheries!

MATREVIS

This answer we'll return, and so farewell.

- 1 sparkle fire: flash with anger
- 2 transitory pomp: fleeting show; i.e. life
- 3 for aye: forever
- 4 enthronized: enthroned
- 5 light—brain'd: frivolous; wanton

EDWARD

Call thou them back, I have no power to speak.

GOURNEY

My lord, the king is willing to resign.

MATREVIS

If he be not, let him choose.

EDWARD

O would I might, but heavens and earth conspire
To make me miserable! Here receive my crown;
Take it. What, are you moved? Pity you me?
Then send for unrelenting Mortimer,
And Isabel, whose eyes, being turned to steel,
Will sooner sparkle fire¹ than shed a tear.
Yet stay, for rather than I'll look on them,
Here, here! [*Gives the crown.*]
Now, sweet God of Heaven,
Make me despise this transitory pomp²,
And sit for aye³ enthroned⁴ in Heaven!
Come, death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,
Or if I live, let me forget myself.

MATREVIS and GOURNEY

My lord

EDWARD

Call me not lord; away! Out of my sight!
Ah, pardon me: grief makes me lunatic!
Farewell;
I know the next news that they bring
Will be my death; and welcome shall it be;
To wretched men, death is felicity.

Exeunt.

[Scene 21.1]

[The royal palace]

Enter QUEEN ISABELLA and MORTIMER

MORTIMER

Fair Isabel, now have we our desire;
The proud corrupters of the light-brain'd⁵ king

- 1 we hold an old wolf by the ears: a proverb meaning we hold it back so it may not strike us
- 2 gripe: seize
- 3 pensiveness: sadness; melancholy
- 4 curstly: malevolently; meanly; in an uncivilized manner

Have done their homage to the lofty gallows,
And he himself lies in captivity.
Be rul'd by me, and we will rule the realm.
In any case take heed of childish fear,
For now we hold an old wolf by the ears¹,
That, if he slip, will seize upon us both,
And gripe² the sorer, being grip'd himself.

ISABELLA

Sweet Mortimer, the life of Isabel,
Be thou persuaded that I love thee well,

MORTIMER

First would I hear news that he were depos'd,
And then let me alone to handle him.

[Enter MATREVIS and GOURNEY with the crown]

[Scene 21.2]

News!

ISABELLA

How fares my lord the king?

MATREVIS

In health, madam, but full of pensiveness³.

ISABELLA

Alas, poor soul, would I could ease his grief!
Thanks, gentle jailer.

MATREVIS

The king hath willingly resign'd his crown.

ISABELLA

O happy news!

GOURNEY

And we have heard that Edmund laid a plot
To set his brother free; no more but so.
What course shall we pursue?

MORTIMER

Because we hear
That Edmund casts to work his liberty,
Remove him still from place to place by night,
And by the way, to make him fret the more,
Speak curstly⁴ to him, and in any case
Let no man comfort him if he chance to weep,
But amplify his grief with bitter words.

- 1 post: go
- 2 thitherwards: that direction
- 3 amain: quickly
- 4 Commend: i.e. give his majesty my greetings; speak well of me to him
- 5 Use: treat
- 6 honourable lord: formal address to the nobility

GOURNEY

Fear not, my lord, we'll do as you command.

MATREVIS

So now away; post¹ thitherwards² amain³.

ISABELLA

Commend⁴ me humbly to his majesty,
And tell him that I labour all in vain
To ease his grief, and work his liberty;

MATREVIS

I will, madam. *Exit*

MORTIMER

Finely dissembled. Do so still, sweet queen.
Here comes the Earl of Kent.

ISABELLA

Use⁵ Edmund friendly, as if all were well.

Enter KENT

[Scene 21.3]

MORTIMER

How fares my honourable⁶ lord of Kent?

KENT

In health, sweet Mortimer. How fares your grace?

ISABELLA

Well, if my lord your brother were released.
But brother, you know it is impossible.

KENT

Why, is he dead?

ISABELLA

No, God forbid!

KENT

I would those words proceeded from your heart.
I hear of late he hath depos'd himself.

ISABELLA

The more my grief.

MORTIMER

And mine.

KENT

Ah, they do dissemble!
Mortimer shall know that he hath wrong'd me!
Hence will I haste to Killingworth Castle,

- 1 ordain'd: appointed the duty of; *esp.* appointed by destiny, fated by God
- 2 dalliance: idle delay
- 3 dangereth: endanger
- 4 appoint: grant
- 5 vexed: tormented
- 6 “the nightly... winged fowls”: the owl, i.e. why must I be kept in the dark and not shown to those in the light
- 7 assuage: calm; soften
- 8 unbowel: open up
- 9 chiefest mark: highest target
- 10 my liege: noteworthy because Gurney is one of few who still consider Edward II to be king here.
- 11 this charge: the task of watching over a person; *also* this command, this order
- 12 dolours: physical suffering; pain
- 13 sustenance: nutritious food
- 14 reliev'd: given relief; helped
- 15 clear: empty; cleanse

And rescue tortured Edward from his foes,
To be revenged on Mortimer and thee. [Aside.]

Exeunt [on one side QUEEN ISABELLA, MORTIMER; on the other KENT]

[Scene 22.1]

Enter MATREVIS and GURNEY with KING EDWARD

MATREVIS

My lord, be not pensive, we are your friends;
Men are ordain'd¹ to live in misery,
Therefore come, dalliance² dangereth³ our lives.

EDWARD

Friends, whither must unhappy Edward go?
Will hateful Mortimer appoint⁴ no rest?
Must I be vexed⁵ like the nightly bird,
Whose sight is loathsome to all winged fowls⁶?
When will the fury of his mind assuage⁷?
When will his heart be satisfied with blood?
If mine will serve, unbowel⁸ straight this breast,
And give my heart to Isabel and him;
It is the chiefest⁹ mark they level at.

GURNEY

Not so my liege¹⁰, the queen hath given this charge¹¹
To keep your grace in safety;
Your passions make your dolours¹² to increase.

EDWARD

Within a dungeon England's king is kept,
Where I am starv'd for want of sustenance¹³.
My daily diet is heart-breaking sobs,
That almost rents the closet of my heart.
Thus lives "king" Edward not reliev'd¹⁴ by any,
And so must die, though pitied by many.
O, water, gentle friends, to cool my thirst,
And clear¹⁵ my body from foul excrements!

- 1 channel water: sewer water
- 2 puddle water: same as channel water; sewer water
- 3 strive: fight against
- 4 wren: small bird
- 5 How now: what is the meaning of this
- 6 asunder: apart; separated

MATREVIS

Here's channel water¹, as our charge is given.
Sit down, for we'll be barbers to your grace.

EDWARD

Traitors, away! What, will you murder me,
Or choke your sovereign with puddle water²?

MATREVIS

Why strive³ you thus? Your labour is in vain!

EDWARD

The wren⁴ may strive against the lion's strength,
But all in vain: so vainly do I strive
To seek for mercy at a tyrant's hand.

[They wash him with puddle water.]

Immortal powers! that knows the painful cares
That wait upon my poor distressed soul,
O level all your looks upon these daring men,
That wrongs their liege and sovereign, England's king!
O Gaveston, 'tis for thee that I am wrong'd,
And for your sakes a thousand wrongs I'll take.

MATREVIS

Come, come away; now put the torches out,

Enter KENT

[Scene 22.2]

GURNEY

How now⁵, who comes there?

MATREVIS

Guard the king sure: it is the Earl of Kent.

EDWARD

O gentle brother, help to rescue me!

MATREVIS

Keep them asunder⁶; thrust in the king.

KENT

Soldiers, let me but talk to him one word.

GURNEY

Lay hands upon the earl for his assault.

KENT

Now let me go you traitors! Yield the king!

- 1 gripe: hold; seize (upon)
- 2 commonweal: the state
- 3 The commons: the common people
- 4 Edward: it is very disrespectful for Mortimer to refer to the king by his given name, and implies that Mortimer has completely stripped Edward of kingship in his mind.
- 5 resolute: absolute; certain

MATREVIS

Edmund, yield thou thyself, or thou shalt die.

KENT

Base villains, wherefore do you gripe¹ me thus?

GURNEY

Take him and so convey him to the court.

KENT

Where is the court but here? Here is the king;
And I will visit him; why stay you me?

MATREVIS

The court is where Lord Mortimer remains;
Thither shall your honour go; and so farewell.

[Scene 22.3]

KENT

O miserable is that commonweal²,
Where lords keep courts, and kings are locked in prison!

GURNEY

Wherefore stay we? On, sir, to the court!

KENT

Ay, lead me whither you will, even to my death,
Seeing that my brother cannot be releas'd.

Exeunt.

[Scene 23.1]

[The royal palace]

Enter MORTIMER

MORTIMER

The king must die, or Mortimer goes down;
The commons³ now begin to pity him.
Yet he that is the cause of Edward¹'s death,
Is sure to bear the common's wrath;
And therefore will I do it cunningly.
Lightborn, come forth!

Enter LIGHTBORN

[Scene 23.2]

Art thou as resolute⁵ as thou wast?

LIGHTBORN

What else, my lord? And far more resolute.

- 1 at his looks: i.e. when you see him
- 2 lawn: fine linen
- 3 blow a little powder in his ears: reference to the murder of the king in *Hamlet*
- 4 quicksilver: liquid mercury
- 5 “I learn’d...quicksilver down”: Lightborne is listing all the ways he knows how to kill, which he learned in Naples, the most dangerous Italian city at the time
- 6 conge: bow

MORTIMER

And hast thou cast how to accomplish it?

LIGHTBORN

Ay, ay, and none shall know which way he died.

MORTIMER

But at his looks¹, Lightborn, thou wilt relent.

LIGHT

Relent! ha, ha! I use much to relent.

MORTIMER

Well, do it bravely, and be secret.

LIGHTBORN

You shall not need to give instructions;
'Tis not the first time I have kill'd a man.
I learn'd in Naples how to poison flowers;
To strangle with a lawn² thrust through the throat;
To pierce the windpipe with a needle's point;
Or whilst one is asleep, to take a quill
And blow a little powder in his ears³;
Or open his mouth and pour quicksilver⁴ down⁵.
And yet I have a braver way than these.

MORTIMER

What's that?

LIGHTBORN

Nay, you shall pardon me; none shall know my tricks.

MORTIMER

I care not how it is, so it be not spied. [*Gives letter.*]
Deliver this to Gurney and Matrevis.
Take this; [*Gives money*] away! and never see me more.

LIGHTBORN

No!

MORTIMER

No;
Unless thou bring me news of Edward's death.

LIGHTBORN

That will I quickly do. Farewell, my lord. [Exit.]

MORTIMER

The realm I rule, the queen do I command,
And with a lowly conge⁶ to the ground,
The proudest lords salute me as I pass;

- 1 “And what I list command who dare control”: i.e. who will dare to question or attempt to overrule my commands
- 2 “*Major sum ... nocere*”: *pronunciation* – [ˈmaɪər ˈsʌm ˈkwam kʊi ˈpɒsɪt fɔːtʃʊnə nɔːkərə]; *meaning* – I am so great that fortune cannot harm me; take from *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, a Latin poet.
- 3 with blades and bills: swords and halberds (see p.39)
- 4 martial law: summary execution without trial
- 5 our: referring to himself and Isabella as the new rulers of the kingdom

I seal, I cancel, I do what I will.
Fear'd am I more than lov'd; let me be fear'd,
And when I frown, make all the court look pale.
Now is all sure: the queen and Mortimer
Shall rule the realm, the king; and none rule us.
Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance;
And what I list command who dare control¹?
*Major sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere*².
“I am so great that fortune cannot harm me”
And that this be the coronation-day,
It pleaseth me, and Isabel the queen. [Trumpets within.]
Enter ISABELLA, with KENT prisoner
[Scene 23.3]

MORTIMER

What traitor have we there with blades and bills³?

ISABELLA

Edmund, the Earl of Kent.

MORTIMER

Did you attempt this rescue, Edmund? Speak.

KENT

Mortimer, I did; he is our king,

ISABELLA

Strike off his head! he shall have martial law⁴.

KENT

Art thou king? Must I die at thy command?

MORTIMER

At our⁵ command! Once more away with him!

KENT

Strike off my head! Base traitors, I defy thee!
Let me but stay and speak; I will not go.
My brother is the king, not Mortimer
And never did he thirst for Edmund's blood:
And therefore, usurpers, whither will you hale me?

KENT is murdered

- 1 I wonder the king dies not: I don't understand how it's possible that the king hasn't died yet.
- 2 channels: sewage pipes
- 3 damp: fog; mist
- 4 so tenderly: so gently; i.e. he was brought up in a cushy way and should not reasonably be able to stand such discomfort
- 5 yesternight: last night
- 6 savour: smell
- 7 assail: assault; attack
- 8 construe: interpret
- 9 make away: kill

[Scene 24.1]
[Berkeley Castle]
Enter MATREVIS and GURNEY

MATREVIS

Gurney, I wonder the king dies not¹,
Being in a vault up to the knees in water
To which the channels² of the castle run,
From whence a damp³ continually ariseth,
That were enough to poison any man,
Much more a king brought up so tenderly⁴.

GURNEY

And so do I, Matrevis: yesternight⁵
I opened but the door to throw him meat,
And I was almost stifled with the savour⁶.

MATREVIS

He hath a body able to endure
More than we can inflict: and therefore now
Let us assail⁷ his mind another while.

GURNEY

Send for him out thence, and I will anger him.

MATREVIS

But stay, who's this?

Enter LIGHTBORN
[Scene 24.2]

LIGHTBORN

My Lord Protector greets you. [*Gives letter.*]

GURNEY

What's here? I know not how to construe⁸ it.

LIGHTBORN

I must have the king.

MATREVIS

Ay, stay awhile, thou shalt have answer straight.
This villain's sent to make away⁹ the king. [*Aside.*]

GURNEY

I thought as much. [*Aside.*]

MATREVIS

And when the murder's done,

- 1 *Pereat iste!*: *pronunciation* – [ˈpɛɪɛt ˈɪstɛ]; *meaning* – Let him die!
- 2 lake: referring to the dungeon, and sewer, Edward is being kept in
- 3 spit: a sharp pointed rod, in this case of metal
- 4 light: torch
- 5 gear: business

See how he must be handled for his labour.
*Pereat iste*¹! Let him have the king. [Aside.]
What else? Here is the key, this is the lake²,
Do as you are commanded by my lord.

LIGHTBORN

I know what I must do. Get you away.
Yet be not far off, I shall need your help;
See that in the next room I have a fire,
And get me a spit³, and let it be red-hot.

MATREVIS

Very well.

GURNEY

Need you anything besides?

LIGHTBORN

What else? A table and a feather-bed.

GURNEY

That's all?

LIGHTBORN

Ay, ay; so, when I call you, bring it in.

MATREVIS

Fear not thou that.

GURNEY

Here's a light⁴, to go into the dungeon.

[Gives a light, and then exit with MATREVIS.]

[Scene 24.3]

LIGHTBORN

So now
Must I about this gear⁵; ne'er was there any
So finely handled as this king shall be.
For, here's a place indeed, with all my heart!

EDWARD

Who's there? What light is that? wherefore com'st thou?

LIGHTBORN

To comfort you, and bring you joyful news.

EDWARD

Small comfort finds poor Edward in thy looks.
Villain, I know thou com'st to murder me.

- 1 hewn: taken from
- 2 Caucasus: mountain range between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea with harsh terrain and bitterly cold climate
- 3 sink: cess-pool
- 4 filth: urine, excrement, etc.
- 5 “the sink... castle falls”: the septic area of the castle, where all the sewage goes
- 6 mire: dirt; mud; dung
- 7 distempered: deranged; mentally disturbed
- 8 nought: nothing
- 9 steadfast: steady; unchanging; i.e. he wants to be focused on praying when he dies

LIGHTBORN

To murder you, my most gracious lord!
Far is it from my heart to do you harm.
The queen sent me to see how you were used,
For she relents at this your misery:
And what eyes can refrain from shedding tears,
To see a king in this most piteous state?

EDWARD

Weep'st thou already? List awhile to me
And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is,
Or as Matrevis', hewn¹ from the Caucasus²,
Yet will it melt, ere I have done my tale.
This dungeon where they keep me is the sink³
Wherein the filth⁴ of all the castle falls⁵.

LIGHTBORN

O villains!

EDWARD

And there in mire⁶ and puddle have I stood
This ten days' space; and, lest that I should sleep,
One plays continually upon a drum.
They give me bread and water, being a king;
So that, for want of sleep and sustenance,
My mind's distempered⁷, and my body's numb'd,
And whether I have limbs or no I know not.
O, would my blood dropp'd out from every vein,
As doth this water from my tattered robes.

LIGHTBORN

O speak no more, my lord! this breaks my heart.
Lie on this bed, and rest yourself awhile.

EDWARD

These looks of thine can harbour nought⁸ but death:
I see my tragedy written in thy brows.
Yet stay a while; forbear thy bloody hand,
And let me see the stroke before it comes,
That even then when I shall lose my life,
My mind may be more steadfast⁹ on my God.

LIGHTBORN

What means your highness to mistrust me thus?

- 1 overwatch'd: over tired from lack of sleep
- 2 grief: anxiety
- 3 buzzeth in mine ears: whispers in my ear

EDWARD

What mean'st thou to dissemble with me thus?

LIGHTBORN

These hands were never stain'd with innocent blood,
Nor shall they now be tainted with a king's.

EDWARD

Forgive my thought for having such a thought.
One jewel have I left; receive thou this. [*Giving jewel.*]
Still fear I, and I know not what's the cause,
But every joint shakes as I give it thee.
O, if thou harbour'st murder in thy heart,
Let this gift change thy mind, and save thy soul!
Know that I am a king: O, at that name
I feel a hell of grief! Where is my crown?
Gone, gone! and do I still remain alive?

LIGHTBORN

You're overwatch'd¹, my lord; lie down and rest.

EDWARD

But that grief² keeps me waking, I should sleep;
For not these ten days have these eye-lids clos'd.
Now as I speak they fall, and yet with fear
Open again. O wherefore sitt'st thou here?

LIGHTBORN

If you mistrust me, I'll begone, my lord.

EDWARD

No, no, for if thou mean'st to murder me,
Thou wilt return again, and therefore stay. [*Sleeps.*]

LIGHTBORN

He sleeps.

EDWARD

[*waking*]. O let me not die yet! O stay awhile!

LIGHTBORN

How now, my lord?

EDWARD

Something still buzzeth in mine ears³,
And tells me if I sleep I never wake;
This fear is that which makes me tremble thus.
And therefore tell me, wherefore art thou come?

1 trice: an instant

LIGHTBORN

To rid thee of thy life!

EDWARD

I am too weak and feeble to resist:

Assist me, sweet God, and receive my soul!

LIGHTBORN

Run for the table.

EDWARD

O spare me, or dispatch me in a trice¹. [*MATREVIS brings in a table.*]

LIGHTBORN

So, lay the table down, and stamp on it,

But not too hard, lest that you bruise his body.

EDWARD is murdered

END OF PLAY