



Richard III

Richard, the Yorkist Duke of Gloucester, has not stopped plotting since the defeat of Henry VI. He conspires to play his brothers, Edward (now King Edward IV) and George, Duke of Clarence, against each other in an attempt to gain the crown for himself. By insinuating charges of treason against George, Richard has him arrested. He also brazenly woos Anne, widow of the murdered Prince of Wales, in the midst of her husband's funeral procession. In the course of events, Edward IV, who is deathly ill at the beginning of the play, dies; Richard has already arranged for George to be murdered while imprisoned, and so it stands that Richard will serve as regent while Edward's son (also named Edward) can come of age.

In order to "protect" the Prince of Wales and his younger brother, Richard has them stay in the Tower of London. He then moves against Edward's loyalist lords; Vaughan, Rivers, Hastings, and Grey are first imprisoned, then executed. Then, with the aid of Buckingham, Richard declares that Edward IV's offspring are technically illegitimate. In an arranged public display, Buckingham offers the throne of England to Richard, who is presumably reluctant to accept. By this time, Richard has alienated even his own mother, who curses him as a bloody tyrant.

By now, Richard needs to bolster his claims to the crown; the young princes locked away in the Tower of London must be disposed of. Buckingham, until now Richard's staunchest ally, balks at this deed. Richard gets a murderer to do the deed, but turns on Buckingham for his insubordination. Now Richard—conveniently a widower after the suspicious demise of Anne—makes a ploy to marry the late King Edward's daughter, his niece. Elizabeth, Edward's widow, makes Richard believe that she agrees to the match; however, Elizabeth has arranged for a match with the Earl of Richmond.

Richmond, at this point in the action, is bringing over an army from France to war against Richard. Buckingham, finding himself out of favor with the king, gives his allegiance to Richmond. However, Buckingham is captured when his army is thrown into disarray by floods, and Richard has him executed immediately. Richmond, who has undergone his own troubles crossing the English Channel, finally lands his army and marches for London. The armies of Richard and Richmond encamp near Bosworth Field; the night before the battle, Richard is visited by the sundry ghosts of the people he has slain, all of whom foretell his doom.

At Bosworth, Richard is unhorsed in the combat. Richmond finds him, and the two of them clash with swords. Richmond prevails

and slays Richard, to be crowned as King Henry VII there on the field of battle. This is the founding of the Tudor line of kings and the end of the War of the Roses.

Dramatis Personae

King Edward the Fourth

Edward, Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward the Fifth

Richard, Duke of York

George, Duke of Clarence

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard the Third

A Young Son of Clarence

Henry, Earl of Richmond, afterwards King Henry the Seventh

Cardinal Bouchier

Thomas Rotherham, Archbishop of York

John Morton

Duke of Buckingham

Duke of Norfolk

Earl of Surrey

Earl Rivers

Marquess of Dorset

Lord Grey

Earl of Oxford

Lord Hastings

Lord Stanley, Earl of Derby

Lord Lovel

Sir Thomas Vaughan

Sir Richard Ratcliff

Sir William Catesby

Sir James Tyrell

Sir James Blunt

Sir Walther Herbert

Sir Robert Brakenbury

Christopher Urswick, a priest

Another Priest

Tressel and Berkeley

Lord Mayor of London

Sheriff of Wiltshire

Elizabeth, Queen of King Edward the Fourth

Margaret, widow of King Henry the Sixth

Duchess of York

Lady Anne

Margaret Plantagenet

Lords and other Attendants

A Pursuivant, Scrivener, Citizens

Murderers, Messengers, Soldiers

Ghosts of Richard III's victims