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JANE SHORE:

A Tragedy,

IN FIVE ACTS;

BY NICHOLAS ROWE.

CORRECTLY GIVEN,

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRES ROYAL.
With Remarks.



London:

Printed by D. S. Maurice, Fenchurch Street;

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REMARKS

It has been observed, that Rowe seldom moves either pity or terror, but often elevates the sentiments; he seldom pierces the breast, but always delights the ear, and often improves the understanding. This excellent tragedy is always acted with great applause, and will, in one instance at least, prove the author's power to excite a powerful effect: consisting chiefly of domestic scenes and private distress, the play before us is an affecting appeal to pity, especially in the parting of Alicia and Hastings, the interview between Jane Shore and Alicia, and in the catastrophe. In the plot, Rowe has nearly followed the history of this misguided and unhappy fair one, and has produced an impressive moral lesson.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

As originally acted in 1713. Covent Garden, 1814.

Lord Hastings

Mr. Booth.

Mr. C. Kemble.

<i>Duke of Gloster</i>	Mr. Cibber.	Mr. Egerton.
<i>Belmour</i>	Mr. Mills.	Mr. Claremont.
<i>Sir Richard Ratcliffe</i>	Mr. Bowman.	Mr. Treby.
<i>Sir William Catesby</i>	Mr. Husband.	Mr. Creswell.
<i>Shore</i>	Mr. Wilks.	Mr. Barrymore.
<i>Jane Shore</i>	Mrs. Oldfield.	Miss O'Neil.
<i>Alicia</i>	Mrs. Porter.	Mrs. Fawcett.

Lords of the Council, &c.



JANE SHORE.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I. THE TOWER.

Enter the Duke of Gloster, Sir Richard Ratcliffe, and Catesby.

Glos. Thus far success attends upon our councils,
And each event has answer'd to my wish;
The queen and all her upstart race are quell'd;
Dorset is banish'd, and her brother Rivers,
Ere this, lies shorter by the head at Pomfret.
The nobles have, with joint concurrence, nam'd me
Protector of the realm: my brother's children,
Young Edward and the little York, are lodg'd
Here, safe within the Tower. How say you, sirs,
Does not this business wear a lucky face?
The sceptre and the golden wreath of royalty
Seem hung within my reach.

Sir R. Then take 'em to you,
And wear them long and worthily: you are
The last remaining male of princely York,
(For Edward's boys, the state esteems not of 'em,)
And therefore on your sov'reignty and rule
The commonweal does her dependence make,
And leans upon your highness' able hand.

Cates. And yet to-morrow does the council meet
To fix a day for Edward's coronation.
Who can expound this riddle?

Glos. That can I.
Those lords are each one my approv'd good friends,
Of special trust and nearness to my bosom;
And, howsoever busy they may seem,
And diligent to bustle in the state,
Their zeal goes on no further than we lead,
And at our bidding stays.

Cates. Yet there is one,
And he amongst the foremost in his power,

Of whom I wish your highness were assur'd.
For me, perhaps it is my nature's fault,
I own I doubt of his inclining much.

Glos. I guess the man at whom your words would point:
Hastings—

Cates. The same.

Glos. He bears me great good will.

Cates. 'Tis true, to you, as to the lord protector,
And Gloster's duke, he bows with lowly service:
But were he bid to cry, God save king Richard,
Then tell me in what terms he would reply.
Believe me, I have prov'd the man, and found him:
I know he bears a most religious reverence
To his dead master Edward's royal memory,
And whither that may lead him, is most plain.
Yet more—One of that stubborn sort he is,
Who, if they once grow fond of an opinion,
They call it honour, honesty, and faith,
And sooner part with life than let it go.

Glos. And yet this tough, impracticable, heart,
Is govern'd by a dainty-finger'd girl;
Such flaws are found in the most worthy natures;
A laughing, toying, wheedling, whimpering, she,
Shall make him amble on a gossip's message,
And take the distaff with a hand as patient
As e'er did Hercules.

Sir R. The fair Alicia,
Of noble birth and exquisite of feature,
Has held him long a vassal to her beauty.

Cates. I fear, he fails in his allegiance there;
Or my intelligence is false, or else
The dame has been too lavish of her feast,
And fed him till he loathes.

Glos. No more, he comes.

Enter Lord Hastings.

Lord H. Health, and the happiness of many days,
Attend upon your grace.

Glos. My good lord chamberlain,
We're much beholden to your gentle friendship.

Lord H. My lord, I come an humble suitor to you.

Glos. In right good time. Speak out your pleasure freely.

Lord H. I am to move your highness in behalf
Of Shore's unhappy wile.

Glos. Say you, of Shore?

Lord H. Once a bright star, that held her place on high:
The first and fairest of our English dames,
While royal Edward held the sov'reign rule.
Now, sunk in grief and pining with despair,
Her waning form no longer shall incite
Envy in woman, or desire in man.
She never sees the sun, but through her tears,
And wakes to sigh the live-long night away.

Glos. Marry! the times are badly chang'd with her,
From Edward's days to these. Then all was jollity,
Feasting and mirth, light wantonness and laughter,
Piping and playing, minstrelsy and masking;
'Till life fled from us like an idle dream,
A show of mummerly without a meaning.
My brother, rest and pardon to his soul,
Is gone to his account; for this his minion,
The revel-rout is done—But you were speaking
Concerning her—I have been told, that you
Are frequent in your visitation to her.

Lord H. No further, my good lord, than friendly pity
And tender-hearted charity allow.

Glos. Go to: I did not mean to chide you for it.
For, sooth to say, I hold it noble in you
To cherish the distress'd.—On with your tale.

Lord H. Thus it is, gracious sir, that certain officers,

Using the warrant of your mighty name,
With insolence unjust, and lawless power,
Have seiz'd upon the lands, which late she held
By grant, from her great master Edward's bounty.

Glos. Somewhat of this, but slightly, have I heard;
And though some counsellors of forward zeal,
Some of most ceremonious sanctity
And bearded wisdom, often have provok'd
The hand of justice to fall heavy on her;
Yet still, in kind compassion of her weakness,
And tender memory of Edward's love,
I have withheld the merciless stern law
From doing outrage on her helpless beauty.

Lord H. Good heav'n, who renders mercy back for mercy,
With open-handed bounty shall repay you:
This gentle deed shall fairly he set foremost,
To screen the wild escapes of lawless passion,
And the long train of frailties flesh is heir to.

Glos. Thus far, the voice of pity pleaded only:
Our further and more full extent of grace
Is given to your request. Let her attend,
And to ourself deliver up her griefs.
She shall be heard with patience, and each wrong
At full redress'd. But I have other news,
Which much import us both; for still my fortunes
Go hand in hand with yours: our common foes,
The queen's relations, our new-fangled gentry,
Have fall'n their haughty crests—that for your privacy. [exeunt.]

SCENE II. AN APARTMENT IN JANE SHORE'S HOUSE.

Enter Belmour and Dumont.

Bel. How she has liv'd you have heard my tale already;
The rest your own attendance in her family,
Where I have found the means this day to place you,
And nearer observation, best will tell you.
See with what sad and sober cheer she comes.

Enter Jane Shore.

Sure, or I read her visage much amiss,
Or grief besets her hard. Save you, fair lady,
The blessings of the cheerful morn be on you,
And greet your beauty with its opening sweets.

Jane S. My gentle neighbour! your good wishes still
Pursue my hapless fortunes; ah! good Belmour!
How few, like thee, inquire the wretched out,
And court the offices of soft humanity.
Like thee, reserve their raiment for the naked,
Reach out their bread to feed the crying orphan,
Or mix their pitying tears with those that weep.
Thy praise deserves a better tongue than mine,
To speak and bless thy name. Is this the gentleman,
Whose friendly service you commended to me?

Bel. Madam, it is.

Jane S. A venerable aspect! *[aside.*
Age sits with decent grace upon his visage,
And worthily becomes his silver locks;
He wears the marks of many years well spent,
Of virtue, truth well tried, and wise experience;
A friend like this would suit my sorrows well.
Fortune, I fear me, sir, has meant you ill, *[to Dumont.*
Who pays your merit with that scanty pittance,
Which my poor hand and humble roof can give.
But to supply those golden vantages,
Which elsewhere you might find, expect to meet
A just regard and value for your worth,
The welcome of a friend, and the free partnership
Of all that little good the world allows me.

Dum. You over-rate me much; and all my answer
Must be my future truth; let that speak for me,
And make up my deserving.

Jane S. Are you of England?

Dum. No, gracious lady, Flanders claims my birth;
At Antwerp has my constant bidding been,
Where sometimes I have known more plenteous days
Than these which now my failing-age affords.

Jane S. Alas! at Antwerp! O, forgive my tears! *[weeping.*

They fall for my offences——and must fall
Long, long, ere they shall wash my stains away.
You knew perhaps—O, grief! O, shame!—my husband.

Dum. I knew him well; but stay this flood of anguish.
The senseless grave feels not your pious sorrows:
Three years and more are past, since I was bid,
With many of our common friends, to wait him
To his last peaceful mansion. I attended,
Sprinkled his clay-cold corse with holy drops,
According to our church's rev'rend rite,
And saw him laid, in hallow'd ground, to rest.

Jane S. Oh, that my soul had known no joy but him!
That I had liv'd within his guiltless arms,
And dying slept in innocence beside him!
But now his honest dust abhors the fellowship,

Enter a Servant.

And scorns to mix with mine.

Serv. The lady Alicia
Attends your leisure.

Jane S. Say, I wish to see her. *[exit Servant.*
Please, gentle sir, one moment to retire,
I'll wait you on the instant, and inform you
Of each unhappy circumstance, in which
Your friendly aid and counsel much may stead me.

[exeunt Belmour and Dumont.

Enter Alicia.

Alic. Still, my fair friend, still shall I find you thus?
Still shall these sighs heave after one another,
These trickling drops chase one another still,
As if the posting messengers of grief
Could overtake the hours fled far away,
And make old time come back?

Jane S. No, my Alicia,
Heaven and his saints be witness to my thoughts,
There is no hour of all my life o'er past,
That I could wish should take its turn again.

Alic. And yet some of those days my friend has known,
Some of those years, might pass for golden ones,
At least if womankind can judge of happiness.
What could we wish, we who delight in empire,
Whose beauty is our sov'reign good, and gives us
Our reasons to rebel, and pow'r to reign;
What could we more than to behold a monarch,
Lovely, renown'd, a conqueror, and young,
Bound in our chains, and sighing at our feet?

Jane S. 'Tis true, the royal Edward was a wonder,
The goodly pride of all our English youth;
He was the very joy of all that saw him.
Form'd to delight, to love, and to persuade.
But what had I to do with kings and courts?
My humble lot had cast me far beneath him;
And that he was the first of all mankind,
The bravest, and most lovely, was my curse.

Alic. Sure something more than fortune join'd your loves:
Nor could his greatness, and his gracious form,
Be elsewhere match'd so well, as to the sweetness
And beauty of my friend.

Jane S. Name him no more:
He was the bane and ruin of my peace.
This anguish, and these tears, these are the legacies
His fatal love has left me. Thou wilt see me,
Believe me, my Alicia, thou wilt see me,
Ere yet a few short days pass o'er my head,
Abandon'd to the very utmost wretchedness.
The hand of pow'r has seiz'd almost the whole
Of what was left for needy life's support;
Shortly thou will behold me poor, and kneeling
Before thy charitable door for bread.

Alic. Joy of my life, my dearest Shore, forbear
To wound my heart with thy foreboding sorrows;
Raise thy sad soul to better hopes than these,
Lift up thy eyes, and let them shine once more,
Bright as the morning sun above the mist.
Exert thy charms, seek out the stern protector,
And sooth his savage temper with thy beauty;
Spite of his deadly, unrelenting, nature,
He shall be mov'd to pity, and redress thee.

Jane S. My form, alas! has long forgot to please;
The scene of beauty and delight is chang'd;
No roses bloom upon my fading cheek,
Nor laughing graces wanton in my eyes;
But haggard grief, lean-looking, sallow, care,
And pining discontent, a rueful train,
Dwell on my brow, all hideous and forlorn.
One only shadow of a hope is left me;
The noble-minded Hastings, of his goodness,
Has kindly underta'en to be my advocate,
And move my humble suit to angry Gloster.

Alic. Does Hastings undertake to plead your cause?
But wherefore should he not? Hastings has eyes:
The gentle lord has a right tender heart,
Melting and easy, yielding to impression,
And catching the soft flame from each new beauty;
But yours shall charm him long.

Jane S. Away, you flatterer!
Nor charge his gen'rous meaning with a weakness,
Which his great soul and virtue must disdain.
Too much of love thy hapless friend has prov'd,
Too many giddy, foolish, hours are gone,
And in fantastic measures danc'd away:
May the remaining few know only friendship.
So thou, my dearest, truest, best, Alicia,
Vouchsafe to lodge me in thy gentle heart,
A partner there, I will give up mankind,
Forget the transports of increasing passion,
And all the pangs we feel for its decay.

Alic. Live! live and reign for ever in my bosom; [*embracing.*
Safe and unrivall'd there, possess thy own;
And you, the brightest of the stars above,
Ye saints that once were women here below,
Be witness of the truth, the holy friendship,
Which here to this my other self I vow.
If I not hold her nearer to my soul,
Than every other joy the world can give,
Let poverty, deformity, and shame,
Distraction and despair, seize me on earth,
Let not my faithless ghost have peace hereafter,

Nor taste the bliss of your celestial fellowship.

Jane S. Yes, thou art true, and only thou art true;
Therefore, these jewels, once the lavish bounty
Of royal Edward's love, I trust to thee; [giving a casket.
Receive this, all that I can call my own,
And let it rest unknown, and safe with thee:
That, if the state's injustice should oppress me,
Strip me of all, and turn me out a wanderer,
My wretchedness may find relief from thee,
And shelter from the storm.

Alic. My all is thine;
One common hazard shall attend us both,
And both be fortunate, or both be wretched.
But let thy fearful, doubting, heart be still;
The saints and angels have thee in their charge,
And all things shall be well. Think not, the good,
The gentle, deeds of mercy thou hast done,
Shall die forgotten all; the poor, the pris'ner,
The fatherless, the friendless, and the widow,
Who daily own the bounty of thy hand,
Shall cry to heav'n, and pull a blessing on thee.
Ev'n man, the merciless insulter, man,
Man, who rejoices in our sex's weakness,
Shall pity thee, and with unwonted goodness
Forget thy tailings, and record thy praise.

Jane S. Why should I think that man will do for me,
What yet he never did for wretches like me?
Mark by what partial justice we are judg'd;
Such is the fate unhappy women find,
And such the curse entail'd upon our kind,
That man, the lawless libertine, may rove,
Free and unquestion'd through the wilds of love;
While woman,—sense and nature's easy fool,
If poor, weak, woman swerve from virtue's rule;
If, strongly charm'd, she leave the thorny way,
And in the softer paths of pleasure stray;
Ruin ensues, reproach and endless shame,
And one false step entirely damns her fame;
In vain, with tears the loss she may deplore,
In vain, look back on what she was before;
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more.

}
[exeunt.]

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE 1. AN APARTMENT IN JANE SHORE'S HOUSE.

Enter Alicia, speaking to Jane Shore as entering.

Alic. No further, gentle friend; good angels guard you,
And spread their gracious wings about your slumbers.
The drowsy night grows on the world, and now
The busy craftsmen and the o'er-labour'd hind
Forget the travail of the day in sleep:
Care only wakes, and moping pensiveness;
With meagre discontented looks they sit,
And watch the wasting of the midnight taper.
Such vigils must I keep, so wakes my soul,
Restless and self-tormented! O, false Hastings!
Thou hast destroy'd my peace. *[knocking without.*
What noise is that?
What visitor is this, who, with bold freedom,
Breaks in upon the peaceful night and rest,
With such a rude approach?

Enter a Servant.

Serv. One from the court,
Lord Hastings (as I think) demands my lady.

Alic. Hastings! Be still, my heart, and try to meet him
With his own arts! with falsehood.—But he comes.

Enter Lord Hastings, speaking to a Servant as entering.

Lord H. Dismiss my train, and wait alone without.
Alicia here! Unfortunate encounter!
But be it as it may.

Alic. When humbly, thus,
The great descend to visit the afflicted,
When thus, unmindful of their rest, they come
To sooth the sorrows of the midnight mourner,
Comfort comes with them; like the golden sun,

Dispels the sullen shades with her sweet influence,
And cheers the melancholy house of care.

Lord H. 'Tis true, I would not over-rate a courtesy,
Nor let the coldness of delay hang on it,
To nip and blast its favour, like a frost;
But rather chose, at this late hour, to come,
That your fair friend may know I have prevail'd;
The lord protector has receiv'd her suit,
And means to show her grace.

Alic. My friend! my lord.

Lord H. Yes, lady, yours; none has a right more ample
To task my pow'r than you.

Alic. I want the words,
To pay you back a compliment so courtly;
But my heart guesses at the friendly meaning,
And wo' not die your debtor.

Lord H. 'Tis well, madam.
But I would see your friend.

Alic. O, thou false lord!
I would be mistress of my heaving heart,
Stifle this rising rage, and learn from thee
To dress my face in easy, dull, indiff'rence;
But 'two' not be; my wrongs will tear their way,
And rush at once upon thee.

Lord H. Are you wise?
Have you the use of reason? Do you wake?
What means this raving, this transporting passion?

Alic. O, thou cool traitor! thou insulting tyrant!
Dost thou behold my poor, distracted, heart,
Thus rent with agonizing love and rage,
And ask me, what it means? Art thou not false?
Am I not scorn'd, forsaken, and abandon'd;
Left, like a common wretch, to shame and infamy;
Giv'n up to be the sport of villains' tongues,
Of laughing parasites, and lewd buffoons?
And all because my soul has doated on thee

With love, with truth, and tenderness unutterable!

Lord H. Are these the proofs of tenderness and love?
These endless quarrels, discontents, and jealousies,
These never-ceasing waitings and complainings,
These furious starts, these whirlwinds of the soul,
Which every other moment rise to madness?

Alic. What proof, alas! have I not giv'n of love?
What have I not abandon'd to thy arms?
Have I not set at nought my noble birth,
A spotless fame, and an unblemish'd race,
The peace of innocence, and pride of virtue?
My prodigality has giv'n thee all;
And now, I've nothing left me to bestow,
You hate the wretched bankrupt you have made.

Lord H. Why am I thus pursu'd from place to place,
Kept in the view, and cross'd at ev'ry turn?
In vain I fly, and, like a hunted deer,
Scud o'er the lawns, and hasten to the covert;
E'er I can reach my safety, you o'ertake me
With the swift malice of some keen reproach,
And drive the winged shaft deep in my heart.

Alic. Hither you fly, and here you seek repose;
Spite of the poor deceit, your arts are known,
Your pious, charitable, midnight visits.

Lord H. If you are wise, and prize your peace of mind,
Yet take the friendly counsel of my love;
Believe me true, nor listen to your jealousy.
Let not that devil, which undoes your sex,
That cursed curiosity, seduce you
To hunt for needless secrets, which, neglected,
Shall never hurt your quiet; but, once known,
Shall sit upon your heart, pinch it with pain,
And banish the sweet sleep for ever from you.
Go to—be yet advis'd—

Alic. Dost thou in scorn
Preach patience to my rage, and bid me tamely
Sit like a poor, contented, idiot down,
Nor dare to think thou'st wrong'd me? Ruin seize thee,
And swift perdition overtake thy treachery.

Have I the least remaining cause to doubt?
Hast thou endeavour'd once to hide thy falsehood?
To hide it might have spoke some little tenderness,
And shown thee half unwilling to undo me:
But thou disdain'st the weakness of humanity.
Thy words, and all thy actions, have confess'd it;
Ev'n now thy eyes avow it, now they speak,
And insolently own the glorious villany.

Lord H. Well then, I own my heart has broke your chains.
Patient, I bore the painful bondage long,
At length my gen'rous love disdains your tyranny;
The bitterness and stings of taunting jealousy,
Vexations days, and jarring, joyless, nights,
Have driv'n him forth to seek some safer shelter,
Where he may rest his weary wings in peace.

Alic. You triumph!—do! and with gigantic pride
Defy impending vengeance. Heav'n shall wink;
No more his arm shall roll the dreadful thunder,
Nor send his lightnings forth: no more his justice
Shall visit the presuming sons of men,
But perjury, like thine, shall dwell in safety.

Lord H. Whate'er my fate decrees for me hereafter,
Be present to me now, my better angel!
Preserve me from the storm that threatens now,
And, if I have beyond atonement sinn'd,
Let any other kind of plague o'ertake me,
So I escape the fury of that tongue.

Alic. Thy prayer is heard—I go—but know, proud lord,
Howe'er thou scorn'st the weakness of my sex,
This feeble hand may find the means to reach thee,
Howe'er sublime in pow'r and greatness plac'd,
With royal favour guarded round and graced;
On eagle's wings my rage shall urge her flight,
And hurl thee headlong from thy topmast height;
Then, like thy fate, superior will I sit,
And view thee fall'n, and grov'ling at my feet;
See thy last breath with indignation go,
And tread thee sinking to the shades below. [*exit.*

Lord H. How fierce a fiend is passion! With what wildness,

What tyranny, untam'd it reigns in woman!
Unhappy sex! whose easy, yielding, temper

Gives way to ev'ry appetite alike:
And love in their weak bosoms is a rage
As terrible as hate, and as destructive.
But soft ye now—for here comes one, disclaims
Strife and her wrangling train; of equal elements,
Without one jarring atom, was she form'd,
And gentleness and joy make up her being.

Enter Jane Shore.

Forgive me, fair one, if officious friendship
Intrudes on your repose, and comes thus late
To greet you with the tidings of success.
The princely Gloster has vouchsaf'd your hearing,
To-morrow he expects you at the court;
There plead your cause, with never-failing beauty,
Speak all your griefs, and find a full redress.

Jane S. Thus humbly let your lowly servant bend. *[kneeling.]*
Thus let me bow my grateful knee to earth,
And bless your noble nature for this goodness.

Lord H. Rise, gentle dame, you wrong my meaning much,
Think me not guilty of a thought so vain,
To sell my courtesy for thanks like these.

Jane S. 'Tis true, your bounty is beyond my speaking:
But, though my mouth be dumb, my heart shall thank you;
And when it melts before the throne of mercy,
Mourning and bleeding for my past offences,
My fervent soul shall breathe one pray'r for you,
That heav'n will pay you back, when most you need,
The grace and goodness you have shown to me.

Lord H. If there be aught of merit in my service,
Impute it there, where most 'tis due, to love;
Be kind, my gentle mistress, to my wishes,
And satisfy my panting heart with beauty.

Jane S. Alas! my lord——

Lord H. Why bend thy eyes to earth?

Wherefore these looks of heaviness and sorrow?
Why breathes that sigh, my love? And wherefore falls
This trickling show'r of tears, to stain thy sweetness?

Jane S. If pity dwells within your noble breast,
(As sure it does), oh, speak not to me thus.

Lord H. Can I behold thee, and not speak of love?
Ev'n now, thus sadly as thou stand'st before me,
Thus desolate, dejected, and forlorn,
Thy softness steals upon my yielding senses,
Till my soul faints, and sickens with desire;
How canst thou give this motion to my heart,
And bid my tongue be still?

Jane S. Cast round your eyes
Upon the high-born beauties of the court;
Behold, like opening roses, where they bloom,
Sweet to the sense, unsully'd all, and spotless;
There choose some worthy partner of your heart,
To fill your arms and bless your virtuous bed;
Nor turn your eyes this way.

Lord H. What means this peevish, this fantastic, change?
Where is thy wonted pleasantness of face,
Thy wonted graces, and thy dimpled smiles?
Where hast thou lost thy wit and sportive mirth?
That cheerful heart, which us'd to dance for ever,
And cast a ray of gladness all around thee?

Jane S. Yes, I will own I merit the reproach;
And for those foolish days of wanton pride,
My soul is justly humbled to the dust:
All tongues, like yours, are licens'd to upbraid me,
Still to repeat my guilt; and urge my infamy,
And treat me like that abject thing I have been.

Lord H. No more of this dull stuff. 'Tis time enough
To whine and mortify thyself with penance,
The present moment claims more gen'rous use;
Thy beauty, night, and solitude, reproach me,
For having talk'd thus long—come, let me press thee,

[laying hold of her.

Pant on thy bosom, sink into thy arms,
And lose myself in the luxurious flood.

Jane S. Forbear, my lord!—here let me rather die, [kneeling.
And end my sorrows and my shame for ever.

Lord H. Away with this perverseness——'tis too much.
Nay, if you strive——'tis monstrous affectation! [striving.

Jane S. Retire! I beg you, leave me——

Lord H. Thus to coy it!——
With one who knows you too.——

Jane S. For mercy's sake——

Lord H. Ungrateful woman! Is it thus you pay
My services?——

Jane S. Abandon me to ruin——
Rather than urge me——

Lord H. This way to your chamber; [pulling her.
There if you struggle——

Jane S. Help, O gracious heaven!
Help! Save me! Help! [exit.

Enter Dumont; he interposes.

Dum. My lord! for honour's sake——

Lord H. Hah! What art thou?—Be gone!

Dum. My duty calls me
To my attendance on my mistress here.

Lord H. Avaunt! base groom——
At distance wait, and know thy office better.

Dum. No, my lord——
The common ties of manhood call me now,
And bid me thus stand up in the defence
Of an oppress'd, unhappy, helpless, woman.

Lord H. And dost thou know me, slave?

Dum. Yes, thou proud lord!
I know thee well; know thee with each advantage
Which wealth, or pow'r, or noble birth, can give thee.
I know thee too for one who stains those honours,
And blots a long illustrious line of ancestry,
By poorly daring thus to wrong a woman.

Lord H. 'Tis wondrous well! I see, my saint-like dame,
You stand provided of your braves and ruffians,
To man your cause, and bluster in your brothel.

Dum. Take back the foul reproach, unmanner'd railer!
Nor urge my rage too far, lest thou shouldst find
I have as daring spirits in my blood
As thou or any of thy race e'er boasted;
And though no gaudy titles grac'd my birth,
Yet heav'n that made me honest, made me more
Than ever king did, when he made a lord.

Lord H. Insolent villain! henceforth let this teach thee
[draws, and strikes him.]
The distance 'twixt a peasant and a prince.

Dum. Nay then, my lord, *[drawing]* learn you by this, how well
An arm resolv'd can guard its master's life.
[they fight; Dumont disarms Lord Hastings.]

Lord H. Confusion! baffled by a base-born hind!

Dum. Now, haughty sir, where is our difference now?
Your life is in my hand, and did not honour,
The gentleness of blood, and inborn virtue,
(Howe'er unworthy I may seem to you,
Plead in my bosom, I should take the forfeit.
But wear your sword again; and know, a lord,
Oppos'd against a man, is but a man.

Lord H. Curse on my failing hand! your better fortune
Has giv'n you 'vantage o'er me; but perhaps
Your triumph may be bought with dear repentance. *[exit.]*

Re-enter Jane Shore.

Jane S. Alas! what have you done? Know ye the pow'r,

The mightiness, that waits upon this lord?

Dum. Fear not, my worthiest mistress; 'tis a cause

In which heaven's guards shall wait you. O pursue,
Pursue, the sacred counsels of your soul,
Which urge you on to virtue;
Assisting angels shall conduct your steps,
Bring you to bliss, and crown your days with peace.

Jane S. O that my head were laid, my sad eyes clos'd,
And my cold corse wound in my shroud to rest!
My painful heart will never cease to beat,
Will never know a moment's peace, till then.

Dum. Would you be happy, leave this fatal place;
Fly from the court's pernicious neighbourhood;
Where innocence is sham'd, and blushing modesty
Is made the scorner's jest; where hate, deceit,
And deadly ruin, wear the masks of beauty,
And draw deluded fools with shows of pleasure.

Jane S. Where should I fly, thus helpless and forlorn,
Of friends and all the means of life bereft?

Dum. Belmour, whose friendly care still wakes to serve you,
Has found you out a little peaceful refuge,
Far from the court and the tumultuous city.
Within an ancient forest's ample verge,
There stands a lonely but a healthful dwelling,
Built for convenience and the use of life:
Around it, fallows, meads, and pastures fair,
A little garden, and a limpid brook,
By nature's own contrivance seem'd dispos'd;
No neighbours, but a few poor simple clowns,
Honest and true, with a well-meaning priest:
No faction, or domestic fury's rage,
Did e'er disturb the quiet of that place,
When the contending nobles shook the land
With York and Lancaster's disputed sway.
Your virtue there may find a safe retreat
From the insulting pow'rs of wicked greatness.

Jane S. Can there be so much happiness in store?
A cell like that is all my hopes aspire to.

Haste then, and thither let us take our flight,
E'er the clouds gather, and the wintry sky
Descends in storms to intercept our passage.

Dum. Will you then go? You glad my very soul.
Banish your fears, cast all your cares on me;
Plenty and ease, and peace of mind, shall wait you,
And make your latter days of life most happy.
O lady! but I must not, cannot, tell you,
How anxious I have been for all your dangers,
And how my heart rejoices at your safety.
So when the spring renews the flow'ry field,
And warns the pregnant nightingale to build,
She seeks the safest shelter of the wood,
Where she may trust her little tuneful brood;
Where no rude swains her shady cell may know,
No serpents climb, nor blasting winds may blow;
Fond of the chosen place, she views it o'er,
Sits there, and wanders through the grove no more;
Warbling, she charms it each returning night,
And loves it with a mother's dear delight.

[*exeunt.*



ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I. THE COURT.

Enter Alicia, with a paper.

Alic. This paper to the great protector's hand
With care and secrecy must be convey'd:
His bold ambition now avows its aim,
To pluck the crown from Edward's infant brow,
And fix it on his own. I know he holds
My faithless Hastings adverse to his hopes,
And much devoted to the orphan king;
On that I build: this paper meets his doubts,
And marks my hated rival as the cause
Of Hastings' zeal for his dead master's sons.
Oh, jealousy! thou bane of pleasing friendship,
How does thy rancour poison all our softness,
And turn our gentle natures into bitterness!
See, where she comes! once my heart's dearest blessing,
Now my chang'd eyes are blasted with her beauty,
Loath that known face, and sicken to behold her.

Enter Jane Shore.

Jane S. O my Alicia!

Alic. What new grief is this?
What unforeseen misfortune has surpris'd thee,
That racks thy tender heart thus?

Jane S. O Dumont!

Alic. Say, what of him?

Jane S. That friendly, honest, man,
Whom Belmour brought of late to my assistance,
On whose kind care, whose diligence and faith,
My surest trust was built, this very morn
Was seiz'd on by the cruel hand of power,
Forc'd from my house, and borne away to prison.

Alic. To prison, said you? can you guess the cause?

Jane S. Too well, I fear. His bold defence of me
Has drawn the vengeance of lord Hastings on him.

Alic. Lord Hastings! ha!

Jane S. Some fitter time must tell thee
The tale of my hard hap. Upon the present
Hang all my poor, my last remaining, hopes.
Within this paper is my suit contain'd;
Here, as the princely Gloster passes forth,
I wait to give it on my humble knees,
And move him for redress.

[she gives the paper to Alicia, who opens and seems to read it.]

Alic. Now for a wile,
To sting my thoughtless rival to the heart;
To blast her fatal beauties, and divide her
For ever from my perjur'd Hastings' eyes:
Their fashions are the same, it cannot fail.

[aside: pulling out the other paper.]

Jane S. But see, the great protector comes this way.
Give me the paper, friend.

Alic. For love and vengeance!

[aside: she gives her the other paper.]

Enter the Duke of Gloster, Sir Richard Ratcliffe, Catesby, courtiers, and other attendants.

Jane S. *[kneeling]* O noble Gloster, turn thy gracious eye,
Incline thy pitying ear to my complaint;
A poor, undone, forsaken, helpless, woman,
Entreats a little bread for charity,
To feed her wants, and save her life from perishing.

Glos. Arise, fair dame, and dry your wat'ry eyes.

[receiving the paper, and raising her.]

Beshrew me, but 'twere pity of his heart
That could refuse a boon to such a suitress.
You've got a noble friend to be your advocate;
A worthy and right gentle lord he is,
And to his trust most true. This present now
Some matters of the state detain our leisure;
Those once dispatch'd, we'll call for you anon,
And give your griefs redress. Go to! be comforted.

Jane S. Good heav'ns repay your highness for this pity,
And show'r down blessings on your princely head.
Come, my Alicia, reach thy friendly arm,
And help me to support this feeble frame,
That, nodding, totters with oppressive woe,
And sinks beneath its load.

[*exeunt Jane S. and Alic.*

Glos. Now by my holidame!
Heavy of heart she seems, and sore afflicted.
But thus it is when rude calamity
Lays its strong gripe upon these mincing minions;
The dainty gew-gaw forms dissolve at once,
And shiver at the shock. What says her paper? [seeming to read.
Ha! What is this? Come nearer, Ratcliffe! Catesby!
Mark the contents, and then divine the meaning. [he reads.
'Wonder not, princely Gloster, at the notice
This paper brings you from a friend unknown;
Lord Hastings is inclin'd to call you master,
And kneel to Richard as to England's king;
But Shore's bewitching wife misleads his heart,
And draws his service to king Edward's sons:
Drive her away, you break the charm that holds him,
And he, and all his powers, attend on you.'

Sir R. 'Tis wonderful!

Cates. The means by which it came
Yet stranger too!

Glos. You saw it giv'n, but now.

Sir R. She could not know the purport.

Glos. No, 'tis plain——
She knows it not, it levels at her life;
Should she presume to prate of such high matters,
The meddling harlot, dear she should abide it.

Cates. What hand soe'er it comes from, be assur'd,
It means your highness well——

Glos. Upon the instant,
Lord Hastings will be here; this morn I mean

To prove him to the quick; then if he flinch,
No more but this—away with him at once,
He must be mine or nothing——But he comes!
Draw nearer this way, and observe me well. *[they whisper.]*

Enter Lord Hastings.

Lord H. This foolish woman hangs about my heart,
Lingers and wanders in my fancy still;
This coyness is put on, 'tis art and cunning,
And worn to urge desire——I must possess her.
The groom, who lift his saucy hand against me,
E'er this, is humbled, and repents his daring.
Perhaps, ev'n she may profit by th' example,
And teach her beauty not to scorn my pow'r.

Glos. This do, and wait me e'er the council sits.

[exeunt Ratcliffe and Catesby.]

My lord, you're well encounter'd; here has been
A fair petitioner this morning with us;
Believe me, she has won me much to pity her:
Alas! her gentle nature was not made
To buffet with adversity. I told her
How worthily her cause you had befriended;
How much for your good sake we meant to do,
That you had spoke, and all things should be well.

Lord H. Your highness binds me ever to your service.

Glos. You know your friendship is most potent with us,
And shares our power. But of this enough,
For we have other matters for your ear.
The state is out of tune: distracting fears,
And jealous doubts, jar in our public councils;
Amidst the wealthy city, murmurs rise,
Lewd railings, and reproach on those that rule,
With open scorn of government; hence credit,
And public trust 'twixt man and man, are broke.
The golden streams of commerce are withheld,
Which fed the wants of needy hinds and artizans,
Who therefore curse the great, and threat rebellion.

Lord H. The resty knaves are over-run with ease,
As plenty ever is the nurse of faction;

If in good days, like these, the headstrong herd
Grow madly wanton and repine, it is
Because the reins of power are held too slack,
And reverend authority of late
Has worn a face of mercy more than justice.

Glos. Beshrew my heart! but you have well divin'd
The source of these disorders. Who can wonder
If riot and misrule o'erturn the realm,
When the crown sits upon a baby brow?
Plainly to speak, hence comes the gen'ral cry,
And sum of all complaint: 'twill ne'er be well
With England (thus they talk) while children govern.

Lord H. 'Tis true, the king is young: but what of that?
We feel no want of Edward's riper years,
While Gloster's valour and most princely wisdom
So well support our infant sov'reign's place,
His youth's support, and guardian to his throne.

Glos. The council (much I'm bound to thank 'em for't)
Have plac'd a pageant sceptre in my hand,
Barren of pow'r, and subject to controul;
Scorn'd by my foes, and useless to my friends.
Oh, worthy lord! were mine the rule indeed,
I think I should not suffer rank offence
At large to lord it in the commonweal;
Nor would the realm be rent by discord thus,
Thus fear and doubt, betwixt disputed titles.

Lord H. Of this I am to learn; as not supposing
A doubt like this——

Glos. Ay, marry, but there is——
And that of much concern. Have you not heard
How, on a late occasion, doctor Shaw
Has mov'd the people much about the lawfulness
Of Edward's issue? By right grave authority
Of learning and religion, plainly proving,
A bastard scion never should be grafted
Upon a royal stock; from thence at full
Discoursing on my brother's former contract
To lady Elizabeth Lucy, long before
His jolly match with that same buxom widow,
The queen he left behind him——

Lord H. Ill befall

Such meddling priests, who kindle up confusion,
And vex the quiet world with their vain scruples!
By heav'n, 'tis done in perfect spite to peace.
Did not the king
Our royal master, Edward, in concurrence
With his estates assembled, well determine
What course the sov'reign rule should take henceforward?
When shall the deadly hate of faction cease,
When shall our long-divided land have rest,
If every peevish, moody, malecontent,
Shall set the senseless rabble in an uproar,
Fright them with dangers, and perplex their brains
Each day with some fantastic giddy change?

Glos. What if some patriot, for the public good,
Should vary from your scheme, new-mould the state?

Lord H. Curse on the innovating hand attempts it!
Remember him, the villain, righteous heaven,
In thy great day of vengeance! Blast the traitor
And his pernicious counsels; who, for wealth,
For pow'r, the pride of greatness, or revenge,
Would plunge his native land in civil wars!

Glos. You go too far, my lord.

Lord H. Your highness' pardon——
Have we so soon forgot those days of ruin,
When York and Lancaster drew forth their battles;
When, like a matron butcher'd by her sons,
Our groaning country bled at every vein;
When murders, rapes, and massacres, prevail'd;
When churches, palaces, and cities, blaz'd;
When insolence and barbarism triumph'd,
And swept away distinction: peasants trod
Upon the necks of nobles: low were laid
The reverend crosier and the holy mitre,
And desolation cover'd all the land?
Who can remember this, and not, like me,
Here vow to sheath a dagger in his heart,
Whose damn'd ambition would renew those horrors,
And set once more that scene of blood before us?

Glos. How now! so hot!

Lord H. So brave, and so resolv'd.

Glos. Is then our friendship of so little moment,
That you could arm your hand against my life?

Lord H. I hope your highness does not think I mean it;
No, heav'n forfend that e'er your princely person
Should come within the scope of my resentment.

Glos. O noble Hastings! nay, I must embrace you;
By holy Paul, you're a right honest man! *[embraces him.]*
The time is full of danger and distrust,
And warns us to be wary. Hold me not
Too apt for jealousy and light surmise,
If, when I meant to lodge you next my heart,
I put your truth to trial. Keep your loyalty,
And live your king and country's best support:
For me, I ask no more than honour gives,
To think me yours, and rank me with your friends. *[exit.]*

Lord H. I am not read,
Nor skill'd and practis'd, in the arts of greatness,
To kindle thus, and give a scope to passion.
The duke is surely noble; but he touch'd me
Ev'n on the tend'rest point; the master-string
That makes most harmony or discord to me.
I own the glorious subject fires my breast,
And my soul's darling passion stands confess'd;
Beyond or love's or friendship's sacred band,
Beyond myself, I prize my native land:
On this foundation would I build my fame,
And emulate the Greek and Roman name;
Think England's peace bought cheaply with my blood,
And die with pleasure for my country's good. *[exit.]*

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I. THE SAME.

Enter Duke of Gloster, Ratcliffe, and Catesby.

Glos. This was the sum of all: that he would brook
No alteration in the present state.
Marry, at last, the testy gentleman
Was almost mov'd to bid us bold defiance:
But there I dropp'd the argument, and, changing
The first design and purport of my speech,
I prais'd his good affection to young Edward,
And left him to believe my thoughts like his.
Proceed we then in this fore-mention'd matter,
As nothing bound or trusting to his friendship.

Sir R. Ill does it thus befall. I could have wish'd
This lord had stood with us.
His name had been of 'vantage to your highness,
And stood our present purpose much in stead.

Glos. This wayward and perverse declining from us,
Has warranted at full the friendly notice,
Which we this morn receiv'd. I hold it certain,
The puling, whining, harlot rules his reason,
And prompts his zeal for Edward's bastard brood.

Cates. If she have such dominion o'er his heart,
And turn it at her will, you rule her fate;
And should, by inference and apt deduction,
Be arbiter of his. Is not her bread,
The very means immediate to her being,
The bounty of your hand? Why does she live,
If not to yield obedience to your pleasure,
To speak, to act, to think, as you command!

Sir R. Let her instruct her tongue to bear your message;
Teach every grace to smile in your behalf,
And her deluded eyes to gloat for you;
His ductile reason will be wound about,
Be led and turn'd again, say and unsay,
Receive the yoke, and yield exact obedience.

Glos. Your counsel likes me well, it shall be follow'd,

She waits without, attending on her suit.
Go, call her in, and leave us here alone.

[*exeunt Ratcliffe and Catesby.*]

How poor a thing is he, how worthy scorn,
Who leaves the guidance of imperial manhood
To such a paltry piece of stuff as this is!
A moppet made of prettiness and pride;
That oftener does her giddy fancies change,
Than glittering dew-drops in the sun do colours—
Now, shame upon it! was our reason given
For such a use; to be thus puff'd about?
Sore there is something more than witchcraft in them,
That masters ev'n the wisest of us all.

Enter Jane Shore.

Oh! you are come most fitly. We have ponder'd
On this your grievance: and though some there are,
Nay, and those great ones too, who would enforce
The rigour of our power to afflict you,
And bear a heavy hand; yet fear not you:
We've ta'en you to our favour: our protection
Shall stand between, and shield you from mishap.

Jane S. The blessings of a heart with anguish broken
And rescu'd from despair, attend your highness.
Alas! my gracious lord, what have I done
To kindle such relentless wrath against me?

Glos. Marry, there are, though I believe them not,
Who say you meddle in affairs of state:
That you presume to prattle like a busy-body,
Give your advice, and teach the lords o' the council
What fits the order of the commonweal.

Jane S. Oh, that the busy world, at least in this,
Would take example from a wretch like me?
None then would waste their hours in foreign thoughts,
Forget themselves, and what concerns their peace,
To search, with prying eyes, for faults abroad,
If all, like me, consider'd their own hearts,
And wept their sorrows which they found at home.

Glos. Go to; I know your pow'r; and though I trust not

To ev'ry breath of fame, I'm not to learn
That Hastings is profess'd your loving vassal.
But fair befall your beauty: use it wisely,
And it may stand your fortunes much in stead,
Give back your forfeit land with large increase,
And place you high in safety and in honour.
Nay, I could point a way, the which pursuing,
You shall not only bring yourself advantage,
But give the realm much worthy cause to thank you.

Jane S. Oh! where or how—can my unworthy hand
Become an instrument of good to any?
Instruct your lowly slave, and let me fly
To yield obedience to your dread command.

Glos. Why, that's well said—Thus then—Observe me well.
The state, for many high and potent reasons,
Deeming my brother Edward's sons unfit
For the imperial weight of England's crown—

Jane S. Alas! for pity.

Glos. Therefore have resolv'd
To set aside their unavailing infancy
And vest the sov'reign rule in abler hands.
This, though of great importance to the public
Hastings, for very peevishness, and spleen,
Does stubbornly oppose.

Jane S. Does he? Does Hastings?

Glos. Ay, Hastings.

Jane S. Reward him for the noble deed, just heav'ns!
For this one action, guard him and distinguish him
With signal mercies, and with great deliverance;
Save him from wrong, adversity, and shame,
Let never-fading honours flourish round him,
And consecrate his name, ev'n to time's end.

Glos. How now!

Jane S. The poor, forsaken, royal little ones!
Shall they be left a prey to savage power?
Can they lift up their harmless hands in vain,

Or cry to heaven for help, and not be heard?

Impossible! O gallant, generous, Hastings,
Go on; pursue, assert, the sacred cause:
Stand forth, thou proxy of all-ruling Providence,
And save the friendless infants from oppression.
Saints shall assist thee with prevailing prayers,
And warring angels combat on thy side.

Glos. You're passing rich in this same heav'nly speech,
And spend it at your pleasure. Nay, but mark me!
My favour is not bought with words like these.
Go to—you'll teach your tongue another tale.

Jane S. No, though the royal Edward has undone me,
He was my king, my gracious master, still;
He lov'd me too, though 'twas a guilty flame;
And can I—O my heart abhors the thought!
Stand by, and see his children robb'd of right?

Glos. Dare not, ev'n for thy soul, to thwart me further!
None of your arts, your feigning, and your foolery;
Your dainty squeamish coying it to me;
Go—to your lord, your paramour, be gone!
Lisp in his ear, hang wanton on his neck,
And play your monkey gambols o'er to him.
You know my purpose, look that you pursue it,
And make him yield obedience to my will.
Do it—or woe upon the harlot's head.

Jane S. Oh that my tongue had every grace of speech,
Great and commanding, as the breath of kings;
That I had art and eloquence divine,
To pay my duty to my master's ashes,
And plead, till death, the cause of injur'd innocence.

Glos. Ha! Dost thou brave me, minion! Dost thou know
How vile, how very a wretch, my pow'r can make thee?
That I can place thee in such abject state,
As help shall never find thee; where, repining,
Thou shall sit down, and gnaw the earth for anguish;
Groan to the pitiless winds without return;
Howl, like the midnight wolf amidst the desert,
And curse thy life, in bitterness and misery!

Jane S. Let me be branded for the public scorn,
Turn'd forth and driv'n to wander like a vagabond,
Be friendless and forsaken, seek my bread
Upon the barren wild and desolate waste,
Feed on my sighs, and drink my falling tears,
E'er I consent to teach my lips injustice,
Or wrong the orphan, who has none to save him.

Glos. 'Tis well—we'll try the temper of your heart.
What, hoa! Who waits without?

Enter Ratcliffe, Catesby, and Attendants.

Glos. Go, some of you, and turn this strumpet forth!
Spurn her into the street; there let her perish,
And rot upon a dunghill. Through the city
See it proclaim'd, that none, on pain of death,
Presume to give her comfort, food, or harbour;
Who ministers the smallest comfort, dies.
Her house, her costly furniture and wealth,
We seize on, for the profit of the state.
Away! Be gone!

Jane S. Oh, thou most righteous Judge——
Humbly behold, I bow myself to thee,
And own thy justice in this hard decree:
No longer, then, my ripe offences spare,
But what I merit, let me learn to bear.
Yet, since 'tis all my wretchedness can give,
For my past crimes my forfeit life receive;
No pity for my sufferings here I crave,
And only hope forgiveness in the grave.

[exit Jane Shore, guarded by Catesby and others.]

Glos. So much for this. Your project's at an end. *[to Sir Richard.]*
This idle toy, this hilding, scorns my power,
And sets us all at nought. See that a guard
Be ready at my call——

Sir R. The council waits
Upon your highness' leisure.

Glos. I'll attend them.

[exeunt.]

SCENE II. THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

The Duke of Buckingham, Earl of Derby, Bishop of Ely, Lord Hastings, and others, discovered in council. The Duke of Gloster enters, and takes his place at the upper end.

Der. In happy times we are assembled here,
To point the day, and fix the solemn pomp,
For placing England's crown, with all due rites,
Upon our sovereign Edward's youthful brow.

Lord H. Some busy, meddling knaves, 'tis said, there are,
As such will still be prating, who presume
To carp and cavil at his royal right;
Therefore, I hold it fitting, with the soonest,
T' appoint the order of the coronation;
So to approve our duty to the king,
And stay the babbling of such vain gainsayers.

Der. We all attend to know your highness' pleasure. [to Gloster.]

Glos. My lords, a set of worthy men you are,
Prudent and just, and careful for the state;
Therefore, to your most grave determination
I yield myself in all things; and demand
What punishment your wisdom shall think meet
T' inflict upon those damnable contrivers,
Who shall, with potions, charms, and witching drugs,
Practise against our person and our life!

Lord H. So much I hold the king your highness' debtor,
So precious are you to the commonweal,
That I presume, not only for myself,
But in behalf of these my noble brothers,
To say, whoe'er they be, they merit death.

Glos. Then judge yourselves, convince your eyes of truth:
Behold my arm, thus blasted, dry, and wither'd,
[pulling up his sleeves.]

Shrunk like a foul abortion, and decay'd,
Like some untimely product of the seasons,
Robb'd of its properties of strength and office.
This is the sorcery of Edward's wife,
Who, in conjunction with that harlot Shore,
And other like confed'rate midnight hags,
By force of potent spells, of bloody characters,

And conjurations horrible to hear,
Call fiends and spectres from the yawning deep,
And set the ministers of hell at work,
To torture and despoil me of my life.

Lord H. If they have done this deed——

Glos. If they have done it!
Talk'st thou to me of ifs, audacious traitor!
Thou art that strumpet witch's chief abettor,
The patron and comploter of her mischiefs,
And join'd in this contrivance for my death.
Nay start not, lords—What ho! a guard there, sirs!

Enter Guards.

Lord Hastings, I arrest thee of high treason.
Seize him, and bear him instantly away.
He sha' not live an hour. By holy Paul,
I will not dine before his head be brought me.
Ratcliffe, stay thou, and see that it be done:
The rest, that love me, rise and follow me.

[exeunt Gloster and Lords.]

Lord Hastings, Sir Richard Ratcliffe, and Guards, remain.

Lord H. What! and no more but this—How! to the scaffold!
O, gentle Ratcliffe! tell me, do I hold thee?
Or, if I dream, what shall I do to wake,
To break, to struggle, through this dread confusion?
For surely death itself is not so painful
As is this sudden horror and surprise.

Sir R. You heard the duke's commands to me were absolute.
Therefore, my lord, address you to your shrift,
With all good speed you may. Summon your courage,
And be yourself; for you must die this instant.

Lord H. Yes, Ratcliffe, I will take thy friendly counsel,
And die as a man should; 'tis somewhat hard,
To call my scatter'd spirits home at once:
But since what must be, must be—let necessity
Supply the place of time and preparation,
And arm me for the blow. 'Tis but to die,
'Tis but to venture on the common hazard,

Which many a time in battle I have run;
'Tis but to close my eyes and shut out day-light,
To view no more the wicked ways of men,
No longer to behold the tyrant Gloster,
And be a weeping witness of the woes,
The desolation, slaughter, and calamities,
Which he shall bring on this unhappy land.

Enter Alicia.

Alic. Stand off, and let me pass—I will, I must,
Catch him once more in these despairing arms,
And hold him to my heart.—O, Hastings! Hastings!

Lord H. Alas! why com'st thou at this dreadful moment,
To fill me with new terrors, new distractions;
To turn me wild with thy distemper'd rage,
And shock the peace of my departing soul?
Away; I pr'ythee, leave me!

Alic. Stop a minute——
Till my full griefs find passage. O, the tyrant!
Perdition fall on Gloster's head and mine.

Lord H. What means thy frantic grief?

Alic. I cannot speak——
But I have murder'd thee.—Oh, I could tell thee!

Lord H. Speak, and give ease to thy conflicting passion!
Be quick, nor keep me longer in suspense,
Time presses, and a thousand crowding thoughts
Break in at once! this way and that they snatch,
They tear, my hurry'd soul.—All claim attention,
And yet not one is heard. Oh! speak, and leave me,
For I have business would employ an age,
And but a minute's time to get it done in.

Alic. That, that's my grief—'tis I that urge thee on,
Thus hunt thee to the toil, sweep thee from earth,
And drive thee down this precipice of fate.

Lord H. Thy reason is grown wild. Could thy weak hand
Bring on this mighty ruin? If it could,
What have I done so grievous to thy soul,

So deadly, so beyond the reach of pardon,
That nothing but my life can make atonement?

Alic. Thy cruel scorn hath stung me to the heart,
And set my burning bosom all in flames:
Raving and mad I flew to my revenge,
And writ I know not what—told the protector,
That Shore's detested wife, by wiles, had won thee
To plot against his greatness.—He believ'd it,
(Oh, dire event of my pernicious counsel!)
And, while I meant destruction on her head,
H' has turn'd it all on thine.

Lord H. O, thou inhuman! Turn thy eyes away,
And blast me not with their destructive beams:
Why should I curse thee with my dying breath?
Be gone! and let me die in peace.

Alic. Canst thou—O, cruel Hastings, leave me thus?
Hear me, I beg thee—I conjure thee, hear me!
While, with an agonizing heart, I swear,
By all the pangs I feel, by all the sorrows,
The terrors and despair, thy loss shall give me,
My hate was on my rival bent alone.
Oh! had I once divin'd, false as thou art,
A danger to thy life, I would have died,
I would have met it for thee.

Lord H. Now mark! and tremble at heaven's just award:
While thy insatiate wrath and fell revenge
Pursu'd the innocence which never wrong'd thee,
Behold, the mischief falls on thee and me:
Remorse and heaviness of heart shall wait thee,
And everlasting anguish be thy portion.
For me, the snares of death are wound about me,
And now, in one poor moment, I am gone.
Oh! if thou hast one tender thought remaining,
Fly to thy closet, fall upon thy knees,
And recommend my parting soul to mercy.

Alic. Oh! yet, before I go for ever from thee,
Turn thee in gentleness and pity to me, *[kneeling.*
And, in compassion of my strong affliction,
Say, is it possible you can forgive

The fatal rashness of ungovern'd love?
For, oh! 'tis certain, if I had not lov'd thee
Beyond my peace, my reason, fame, and life,
This day of horror never would have known us.

Lord H. Oh, rise, and let me hush thy stormy sorrows,
[*raising her.*

Assuage thy tears, for I will chide no more,
No more upbraid thee, thou unhappy fair one.
I see the hand of heav'n is arm'd against me;
And, in mysterious providence, decrees
To punish me by thy mistaken hand.
Most righteous doom! for, oh, while I behold thee,
Thy wrongs rise up in terrible array,
And charge thy ruin on me; thy fair fame,
Thy spotless beauty, innocence, and youth,
Dishonour'd, blasted, and betray'd, by me.

Alic. And does thy heart relent for my undoing?
Oh, that inhuman Gloster could be mov'd,
But half so easily as I can pardon!

Lord H. Here, then, exchange we mutual forgiveness:
So may the guilt of all my broken vows,
My perjuries to thee, be all forgotten,
As here my soul acquits thee of my death,
As here I part without one angry thought,
As here I leave thee with the softest tenderness,
Mourning the chance of our disastrous loves,
And begging heav'n to bless and to support thee.

Sir R. My lord, despatch; the duke has sent to chide me,
For loitering in my duty——

Lord H. I obey.

Alic. Insatiate, savage, monster! Is a moment
So tedious to thy malice? Oh, repay him,
Thou great avenger! Give him blood for blood:
Guilt, haunt him! fiends, pursue him! lightnings, blast him!
That he may know how terrible it is,
To want that moment he denies thee now.

Lord H. This rage is all in vain, that tears thy bosom:
Retire, I beg thee;

To see thee thus, thou know'st not how it wounds me;
Thy agonies are added to my own,
And make the burden more than I can bear.
Farewell—Good angels visit thy afflictions,
And bring thee peace and comfort from above. [exit.

Alic. Oh! stab me to the heart, some pitying hand,
Now strike me dead——

Re-enter Lord Hastings.

Lord H. One thing I had forgot——
I charge thee, by our present common miseries;
By our past loves, if they have yet a name;
By all thy hopes of peace here and hereafter;
Let not the rancour of thy hate pursue
The innocence of thy unhappy friend;
Thou know'st who 'tis I mean; Oh! shouldst thou wrong her,
Just heav'n shall double all thy woes upon thee,
And make 'em know no end—Remember this,
As the last warning of a dying man.
Farewell, for ever!

[*the Guards carry Hastings off.*

Alic. For ever! Oh, for ever!
Oh, who can bear to be a wretch for ever!
My rival, too! his last thoughts hung on her,
And, as he parted, left a blessing for her:
Shall she be blest, and I be curst, for ever?
No; since her fatal beauty was the cause
Of all my sufferings, let her share my pains;
Let her, like me, of every joy forlorn,
Devote the hour when such a wretch was born;
Cast ev'ry good, and ev'ry hope, behind;
Detest the works of nature, loathe mankind;
Like me, with cries distracted fill the air,
Tear her poor bosom, rend her frantic hair,
And prove the torments of the last despair. }
[exit.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I. A STREET.

Enter Belmour and Dumont.

Dum. You saw her, then?

Bel. I met her, as returning
In solemn penance from the public cross.
Before her, certain rascal officers,
Slaves in authority, the knaves of justice,
Proclaim'd the tyrant Gloster's cruel orders.
Around her, numberless, the rabble flow'd,
Should'ring each other, crowding for a view,
Gaping and gazing, taunting and reviling;
Some pitying—but those, alas! how few!
The most, such iron hearts we are, and such
The base barbarity of human-kind,
With insolence and lewd reproach pursu'd her,
Hooting and railing, and with villanous hands
Gath'ring the filth from out the common ways,
To hurl upon her head.

Dum. Inhuman dogs!
How did she bear it?

Bel. With the gentlest patience;
Submissive, sad, and lowly, was her look;
A burning taper in her hand she bore,
And on her shoulders carelessly confus'd,
With loose neglect, her lovely tresses hung;
Upon her cheek a faintish blush was spread;
Feeble she seem'd, and sorely smit with pain.
While, barefoot as she trod the flinty pavement,
Her footsteps all along were mark'd with blood;
Yet, silent still she pass'd, and unrepining:
Her streaming eyes bent ever on the earth,
Except when, in some bitter pang of sorrow,
To heav'n she seem'd in fervent zeal to raise,
And beg that mercy man deny'd her here.

Dum. When was this piteous sight?

Bel. These last two days.
You know my care was wholly bent on you,
To find the happy means of your deliverance,
Which but for Hastings' death I had not gain'd.
During that time, although I have not seen her,
Yet divers trusty messengers I've sent,
To wait about, and watch a fit convenience
To give her some relief, but all in vain;
A churlish guard attends upon her steps,
Who menace those with death, that bring her comfort,
And drive all succour from her.

Dum. Let 'em threaten;
Let proud oppression prove its fiercest malice;
So heav'n befriend my soul, as here I vow
To give her help, and share one fortune with her.

Bel. Mean you to see her thus in your own form?

Dum. I do.

Bel. And have you thought upon the consequence?

Dum. What is there I should fear?

Bel. Have you examin'd
Into your inmost heart, and try'd at leisure
The sev'ral secret springs that move the passions?
Has mercy fix'd her empire there so sure,
That wrath and vengeance never may return?
Can you resume a husband's name, and bid
That wakeful dragon, fierce resentment, sleep?

Dum. O thou hast set my busy brain at work,
And now she musters up a train of images,
Which, to preserve my peace, I had cast aside,
And sunk in deep oblivion—Oh, that form!
That angel face on which my dotage hung!
How I have gaz'd upon her, till my soul
With very eagerness went forth towards her,
And issu'd at my eyes.—Was there a gem
Which the sun ripens in the Indian mine,
Or the rich bosom of the ocean yields?
What was there art could make, or wealth could buy,
Which I have left unsought to deck her beauty?

What could her king do more?—And yet she fled.

Bel. Away with that sad fancy——

Dum. Oh, that day!
The thought of it must live for ever with me.
I met her, Belmour, when the royal spoiler
Bore her in triumph from my widow'd home!
Within his chariot, by his side, she sat,
And listen'd to his talk with downward looks,
'Till, sudden as she chanc'd aside to glance,
Her eyes encounter'd mine—Oh! then, my friend!
Oh! who can paint my grief and her amazement!
As at the stroke of death, twice turn'd she pale;
And twice a burning crimson blush'd all o'er her;
Then, with a shriek heart-wounding, loud she cry'd,
While down her cheeks two gushing torrents ran
Fast falling on her hands, which thus she wrung——
Mov'd at her grief, the tyrant ravisher,
With courteous action, woo'd her oft to turn;
Earnest he seem'd to plead, but all in vain;
Ev'n to the last she bent her sight towards me,
And follow'd me——till I had lost myself.

Bel. Alas, for pity! Oh! those speaking tears!
Could they be false? did she not suffer with you.
For, though the king by force possess'd her person,
Her unconsenting heart dwelt still with you?
If all her former woes were not enough,
Look on her now; behold her where she wanders,
Hunted to death, distress'd on every side,
With no one hand to help; and tell me then,
If ever misery were known like hers?

Dum. And can she bear it? Can that delicate frame
Endure the beating of a storm so rude?
Can she, for whom the various seasons chang'd
To court her appetite and crown her board,
For whom the foreign vintages were press'd,
For whom the merchant spread his silken stores,
Can she——
Entreat for bread, and want the needful raiment
To wrap her shiv'ring bosom from the weather?
When she was mine, no care came ever nigh her;

I thought the gentlest breeze that wakes the spring
Too rough to breathe upon her; cheerfulness
Danc'd all the day before her, and at night
Soft slumbers waited on her downy pillow—
Now, sad and shelterless, perhaps she lies,
Where piercing winds blow sharp, and the chill rain
Drops from some pent-house on her wretched head,
Drenches her locks, and kills her with the cold.
It is too much.—Hence with her past offences,
They are aton'd at full.—Why stay we then?
Oh! let us haste, my friend, and find her out.

Bel. Somewhere about this quarter of the town,
I hear the poor abandon'd creature lingers:
Her guard, though set with strictest watch to keep
All food and friendship from her, yet permit her
To wander in the streets, there choose her bed,
And rest her head on what cold stone she pleases.

Dum. Here then let us divide; each in his round
To search her sorrows out; whose hap it is
First to behold her, this way let him lead
Her fainting steps, and meet we here together. *[exeunt.]*

SCENE II. A STREET.

Enter Jane Shore, her hair hanging loose on her shoulders, and bare-footed.

Jane S. Yet, yet, endure, nor murmur, O, my soul!
For are not thy transgressions great and numberless?
Do they not cover thee like rising floods,
And press thee like a weight of waters down?
Wait then with patience, till the circling hours
Shall bring the time of thy appointed rest,
And lay thee down in death.
And, hark! methinks the roar, that late pursu'd me,
Sinks like the murmurs of a falling wind,
And softens into silence. Does revenge
And malice then grow weary, and forsake me?
My guard, too, that observ'd me still so close,
Tire in the task of their inhuman office,
And loiter far behind. Alas! I faint,
My spirits fail at once—this is the door
Of my Alicia—Blessed opportunity!

I'll steal a little succour from her goodness,
Now while no eye observes me.

[she knocks at the door.]

Enter Servant.

Is your lady,
My gentle friend, at home? Oh! bring me to her.

Serv. Hold, mistress, whither would you? *[pulling her back.]*

Jane S. Do you not know me?

Serv. I know you well, and know my orders too:
You must not enter here——

Jane S. Tell my Alicia,
'Tis I would see her.

Serv. She is ill at ease,
And will admit no visitor.

Jane S. But tell her,
Tis I, her friend, the partner of her heart,
Wait at the door and beg,——

Serv. 'Tis all in vain,—
Go hence, and howl to those that will regard you.
[shuts the door, and exit.]

Jane S. It was not always thus; the time has been,
When this unfriendly door, that bars my passage,
Flew wide, and almost leap'd from off its hinges,
To give me entrance here; when this good house
Has pour'd forth all its dwellers to receive me;
When my approaches made a little holiday,
And every face was dress'd in smiles to meet me:
But now 'tis otherwise; and those who bless'd me
Now curse me to my face. Why should I wander,
Stray further on, for I can die ev'n here?
[she sits down at the door.]

Enter Alicia in disorder, two Servants following.

Alic. What wretch art thou, whose misery and baseness

Hangs on my door; whose hateful whine of woe
Breaks in upon my sorrows, and distracts
My jarring senses with thy beggar's cry?

Jane S. A very beggar, and a wretch, indeed;
One driv'n by strong calamity to seek
For succours here; one perishing for want,
Whose hunger has not tasted food these three days;
And humbly asks, for charity's dear sake,
A draught of water and a little bread.

Alic. And dost thou come to me, to me, for bread;
I know thee not—Go—hunt for it abroad,
Where wanton hands upon the earth have scatter'd it,
Or cast it on the waters—Mark the eagle,
And hungry vulture, where they wind the prey;
Watch where the ravens of the valley feed,
And seek thy food with them—I know thee not.

Jane S. And yet there was a time, when my Alicia
Has thought unhappy Shore her dearest blessing,
And mourn'd the live-long day she pass'd without me;
Inclining fondly to me, she has sworn
She lov'd me more than all the world besides.

Alic. Ha! say'st thou? Let me look upon thee well—
'Tis true—I know thee now—A mischief on thee!
Thou art that fatal fair, that cursed she,
That set my brain a madding. Thou hast robb'd me;
Thou hast undone me—Murder! O, my Hastings!
See his pale bloody head shoots glaring by me!
Avaunt; and come not near me—

Jane S. To thy hand
I trusted all; gave my whole store to thee,
Nor do I ask it back; allow me but
The smallest pittance, give me but to eat,
Lest I fall down and perish here before thee.

Alic. Nay! tell not me! Where is thy king, thy Edward,
And all thy cringing train of courtiers,
That bent the knee before thee?

Jane S. Oh! for mercy!

Alic. Mercy! I know it not—for I am miserable.

I'll give thee misery, for here she dwells,
This is her house, where the sun never dawns;
The bird of night sits screaming o'er the roof,
Grim spectres sweep along the horrid gloom,
And nought is heard but wailings and lamentings.
Hark! something cracks above! it shakes! it totters!
And see the nodding ruin falls to crush me!
'Tis fall'n, 'tis here! I felt it on my brain!—
Let her take my counsel:
Why shouldst thou be a wretch? Stab, tear thy heart,
And rid thyself of this detested being:
I wo' not linger long behind thee here.
A waving flood of bluish fire swells o'er me;
And now 'tis out, and I am drown'd in blood.
Ha! what art thou? thou horrid headless trunk?
It is my Hastings! see he wafts me on!
Away! I go! I fly! I follow thee. *[runs off.*

Jane S. Alas! she raves; her brain, I fear, is turn'd;
In mercy look upon her, gracious heav'n,
Nor visit her for any wrong to me.
Sure I am near upon my journey's end;
My head runs round, my eyes begin to fail,
And dancing shadows swim before my sight.
I can no more, *[lies down]* receive me, thou cold earth,
Thou common parent, take me to thy bosom,
And let me rest with thee.

Enter Belmour.

Bel. Upon the ground!
Thy miseries can never lay thee lower.
Look up, thou poor afflicted one! thou mourner,
Whom none has comforted! Where are thy friends,
The dear companions of thy joyful days,
Whose hearts thy warm prosperity made glad,
Whose arms were taught to grow like ivy round thee,
And bind thee to their bosoms? Thus, with thee,
Thus let us live, and let us die, they said.
Now where are they?

Jane S. Ah, Belmour! where, indeed? They stand aloof,
And view my desolation from afar!

And yet thy goodness turns aside to pity me.
Alas! there may be danger; get thee gone.
Let me not pull a ruin on thy head.
Leave me to die alone, for I am fall'n
Never to rise, and all relief is vain.

Bel. Yet raise thy drooping head; for I am come
To chase away despair. Behold! where yonder
That honest man, that faithful, brave, Dumont,
Is hastening to thy aid—

Jane S. Dumont! Ha! where?

[raising herself, and looking about.

Then heav'n has heard my pray'r; his very name
Renews the springs of life, and cheers my soul.
Has he then 'scap'd the snare?

Bel. He has; but see——
He comes, unlike to that Dumont you knew,
For now he wears your better angel's form,
And comes to visit you with peace and pardon.

Enter Shore.

Jane S. Speak, tell me! Which is he? And oh! what would
This dreadful vision! See it comes upon me—
It is my husband——Ah! *[she swoons.*

Shore. She faints! support her!

Bel. Her weakness could not bear the strong surprise.
But see, she stirs! And the returning blood
Faintly begins to blush again, and kindle
Upon her ashy cheek—

Shore. So—gently raise her— *[raising her up.*

Jane S. Ha! what art thou? Belmour!

Bel. How fare you, lady?

Jane S. My heart is thrill'd with horror—

Bel. Be of courage—

Your husband lives! 'tis he, my worthiest friend—

Jane S. Still art thou there!—Still dost thou hover round me!
Oh, save me, Belmour, from his angry shade!

Bel. 'Tis he himself! he lives! look up—

Jane S. I dare not!
Oh! that my eyes could shut him out for ever—

Shore. Am I so hateful then, so deadly to thee,
To blast thy eyes with horror? Since I'm grown
A burden to the world, myself, and thee,
Would I had ne'er surviv'd to see thee more.

Jane S. Oh! thou most injur'd—dost thou live, indeed?
Fall then, ye mountains, on my guilty head;
Hide me, ye rocks, within your secret caverns;
Cast thy black veil upon my shame, O night!
And shield me with thy sable wing for ever.

Shore. Why dost thou turn away?—Why tremble thus?
Why thus indulge thy fears? and, in despair,
Abandon thy distracted soul to horror?
Cast every black and guilty thought behind thee,
And let 'em never vex thy quiet more.
My arms, my heart, are open to receive thee,
To bring thee back to thy forsaken home,
With tender joy, with fond forgiving love.
Let us haste,
Now while occasion seems to smile upon us,
Forsake this place of shame, and find a shelter.

Jane S. What shall I say to you? But I obey—

Shore. Lean on my arm—

Jane S. Alas! I'm wondrous faint:
But that's not strange, I have not eat these three days.

Shore. Oh! merciless!

Jane S. Oh! I am sick at heart!—

Shore. Thou murd'rous sorrow!

Wo't thou still drink her blood, pursue her still?
Must she then die? O my poor penitent!
Speak peace to thy sad heart; she hears me not:
Grief masters ev'ry sense—

Enter Catesby, with a Guard.

Cates. Seize on 'em both, as traitors to the state—

Bel. What means this violence?

[Guards lay hold on Shore and Belmour.]

Cates. Have we not found you,
In scorn of the protector's strict command,
Assisting this base woman, and abetting
Her infamy?

Shore. Infamy on thy head!
Thou tool of power, thou pander to authority!
I tell thee, knave, thou know'st of none so virtuous,
And she that bore thee was an Ethiop to her.

Cates. You'll answer this at full—away with 'em.

Shore. Is charity grown treason to your court?
What honest man would live beneath such rulers?
I am content that we should die together—

Cates. Convey the men to prison; but, for her,
Leave her to hunt her fortune as she may.

Jane S. I will not part with him—for me!—for me!
Oh! must he die for me?

[following him as he is carried off; she falls.]

Shore. Inhuman villains! *[breaks from the Guards.]*
Stand off! the agonies of death are on her—
She pulls, she gripes me hard with her cold hand.

Jane S. Was this blow wanting to complete my ruin?
Oh! let me go, ye ministers of terror.
He shall offend no more, for I will die,
And yield obedience to your cruel master.
Tarry a little, but a little longer,
And take my last breath with you.

Shore. Oh, my love!

Why dost thou fix thy dying eyes upon me,
With such an earnest, such a piteous, look,
As if thy heart were full of some sad meaning
Thou couldst not speak?—

Jane S. Forgive me!—but forgive me!

Shore. Be witness for me, ye celestial hosts,
Such mercy and such pardon as my soul
Accords to thee, and begs of heav'n to show thee;
May such befall me at my latest hour,
And make my portion blest or curst for ever.

Jane S. Then all is well, and I shall sleep in peace—
'Tis very dark, and I have lost you now—
Was there not something I would have bequeath'd you?
But I have nothing left me to bestow,
Nothing but one sad sigh. Oh! mercy, heav'n! [*dies.*]

Bel. There fled the soul,
And left her load of misery behind.

Shore. Oh, heavy hour!
Fare thee well—
[*kissing her.*]
Now execute your tyrant's will, and lead me
To bonds or death, 'tis equally indifferent.

Bel. Let those, who view this sad example, know
What fate attends the broken marriage vow;
And teach their children, in succeeding times,
No common vengeance waits upon these crimes,
When such severe repentance could not save
From want, from shame, and an untimely grave.
[*the curtain descends slowly to music.*]

THE END.

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