

Henry V, Part Three

Act III, sc. 2 (line 124)

GLOUCESTER

Ay, Edward will use women honourably.

Would he were wasted, marrow, bones and all,

That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring,

To cross me from the golden time I look for!

And yet, between my soul's desire and me--

The lustful Edward's title buried--

Is Clarence, Henry, and his son young Edward,

And all the unlook'd for issue of their bodies,

To take their rooms, ere I can place myself:

A cold premeditation for my purpose!

Why, then, I do but dream on sovereignty;

Like one that stands upon a promontory,

And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,

Wishing his foot were equal with his eye,

And chides the sea that sunders him from thence,

Saying, he'll lade it dry to have his way:

So do I wish the crown, being so far off;

And so I chide the means that keeps me from it;

And so I say, I'll cut the causes off,

Flattering me with impossibilities.

My eye's too quick, my heart o'erweens too much,

Unless my hand and strength could equal them.

Well, say there is no kingdom then for Richard;

What other pleasure can the world afford?

I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap,

And deck my body in gay ornaments,

And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks.

O miserable thought! and more unlikely

Than to accomplish twenty golden crowns!

Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb:

And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,

She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe,

To shrink mine arm up like a wither'd shrub;

To make an envious mountain on my back,

Where sits deformity to mock my body;

To shape my legs of an unequal size;

To disproportion me in every part,

Like to a chaos, or an unlick'd bear-whelp

That carries no impression like the dam.

And am I then a man to be beloved?

O monstrous fault, to harbour such a thought!

Then, since this earth affords no joy to me,

But to command, to cheque, to o'erbear such

As are of better person than myself,

I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,

And, whiles I live, to account this world but hell,
Until my mis-shaped trunk that bears this head
Be round impaled with a glorious crown.
And yet I know not how to get the crown,
For many lives stand between me and home:
And I,--like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rends the thorns and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way;
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out,--
Torment myself to catch the English crown:
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.
Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,

And set the murderous Machiavel to school.

Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?

Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.