

The Black Arrow

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The Black Arrow

Dramatization of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel

by Christian Lanciai (2014)

The Characters:

two women

a farmer

Richard 'Dick' Shelton

Nick Appleyard, an old bowman and war veteran

Bennet Hatch

Sir Oliver Oates, vicar

Sir Daniel Brackley, knight

a host for an inn

John Matcham, alias Joanna Sedley

Brother Lawless

Ellis Duckworth

Alicia Risingham

Lord Risingham

Duke Richard of Gloucester, later Richard III

King Henrik VI

other outlaws and soldiers

The action takes place during the final stage of the War of the Roses
in England up till summer 1471.

Act I scene 1. The Tunstall village.

A woman Here they come recruiting war people again.

A farmer Will they never get enough?

Another woman No, they will never get enough. Men are only good for fighting and to torture us in bed. Just let them all put an end to each other.

First woman It's just that, when the war takes our men we are forced to live on turnips.

Dick Not at all. Every soldier gets his salary of sixpence a day and the bowmen get twelve.

The woman Yes, if they survive. The problem about war wages is that the only job of the soldiers is to kill each other.

Dick To honour the righteous and make sure they survive.

Second woman Another problem is that they don't.

The farmer Who are then the righteous?

Dick Those who fight for the King and his legal government.

The farmer The problem is that the King is too weak and can't govern. That's why the house of York has presented an alternative.

Dick Which is not legal.

The woman For me it's the same, since all governments whoever they are just make life difficult for ordinary people.

Dick That's what we are fighting so intrepidly for, to sometime break the vicious circle.

2 woman It's a treadmill. You will have to fight forever and in vain, while the men just get murdered and murder each other.

Dick I am looking for the old Bowman Appleyard. Is he here?

First woman (to the farmer) And you have no right to judge the king for not being able to handle his misfortunes.

Farmer If a man is a man he will manage his misfortunes. But he is no man who allows women to rule over him all his life.

2 woman There is nothing wrong about the queen.

Farmer I haven't said there was.

2 woman You said she made the king incompetent.

Farmer No, he already was before she married him. It's dangerous to be born a king. Then you will only lose your crown.

First woman So it's his own fault that he was born a king?

Farmer No, I didn't say so. But if you are born a king you never get to learn what it is to be a human being, which perhaps is the most important lesson in life, if you will be able to manage.

Dick What about Appleyard?

Appleyard (showing up) Who called on me?

Dick They want you at Moat House. There will be new fights.

Appleyard I heard you discuss the king. But his father, he was a real king!

Farmer Here he goes again.

Appleyard Just because the times have grown so difficult it's the more important to remember those times that made a difference!

Farmer Which only you remember and can bear witness of.

Appleyard The more important to observe them!

Farmer But my good old sir, they are long since passed!

Appleyard Not as long as I remember them. Agincourt will resound until doomsday!

First woman Don't urge him by challenging him. Then we'll just have to listen to the whole battle again from the start.

Appleyard The most glorious battle of England must never be forgotten!

Farmer Quite. But no one is thinking about it when we today fight all those small petty fights between ourselves and our brothers! In the face of the dishonourable divisions between brothers no one will remember any honour any more.

Dick Here is Bennet Hatch.

Bennet Sir Daniel needs us at once at Moat House. Will you come?

Appleyard Of course. All at once. My bow is always longing for new songs to sing.

Bennet That's the spirit.

Farmer Wasn't Sir Daniel quite recently for the house of York?

First woman That was then. Since then the king has returned, and he has as usual turned his cloak after the wind.

Farmer And every time he turns it he acquires another chest of riches.

2 woman Don't speak ill of him. We are all in his hands.

Farmer Master Dick, he is your guardian. You if anyone should know him. On which side is he really?

Dick Honestly speaking, I don't know.

Farmer There you are. He goes to bed a Lancaster and gets up next morning a York.

Dick What's the matter, Nick Appleyard?

Appleyard I don't like the manner of the birds swarming over the woods.

Dick What's the matter with them?

Appleyard Something bothers them. There is something going on.

Bennet Nick Appleyard's instinct for war and trouble is notorious for its consistent infallibility. What do you think it means?

Appleyard I don't know. But it smells bad.

Farmer The outlaws are hiding there. They are always up to something.

Appleyard Well, Bennet, how many men can we have to hold Moat House?

Bennet At least a dozen. We will ride there with an escort.

Appleyard At least twenty would be needed.

Bennet That's why I try to muster some more.

Appleyard (*suddenly gets an arrow in his back*) Aaaaah! (*falls*)

Bennet Where did that arrow come from?

Farmer The woods over there. A master shot.

Appleyard (*dying*) I am done for. Pull it out!

Dick It's black.

Appleyard Don't let a black arrow in my back send me to hell! Pull it out! (*dies*)

Bennet He is finished. What do you think of this, Dick?

Dick Mischief in the wind. But as the farmer said, it was a master shot and well aimed. Old Nick Appleyard must have been chosen.

Farmer Look!

Bennet The church portal! Who is he?

Dick I have never seen him before.

Bennet Shoot him down, Dick!

Dick (*takes his crossbow and takes aim*) He moves too quickly. At best we could only wound him.

Farmer He has shot a message to the gate with an arrow!

Bennet Go and get the arrow and the message, old man! Maybe it will explain the situation. (*the farmer leaves*)

Dick (*shoots*) Missed!

Bennet No, you hit him! He falls!

Dick No, he is rising again. The arrow only touched him.

First woman Now he is gone. He must be one of the outlaws.

Farmer (*returns panting*) A message! And a black arrow!

Bennet Let's see. The arrow that killed Nick Appleyard also says something. Can you read it, Dick?

Dick "Appleyard, from John Amend-All." That confirms the intention. Who is John Amend-All?

Bennet Surely some outcast hiding behind the name.

Farmer Here is Sir Oliver. He appears somewhat shocked.

Bennet He should be. It's his church.

Sir Oliver This is too much! A strike against my church! And a man shot down in our midst!

Bennet Show him the arrow, Dick. (*Dick shows it to him.*)

Sir Oliver John Amend-All! Woe betide us!

Bennet Do you know who it is, Sir Oliver?

Sir Oliver I have no idea. At least twenty outlaws live out there in the woods. It could be any one of them.

Bennet We have many enemies. Sir Daniel has been rough and forced many away from their homes and farms but was always careful about having the law on his side, which only turned his victims the more hateful and dangerous. What do you think of Ellis Duckworth?

Sir Oliver Out of the question! Only the lords of York could be behind this. Put the question who would benefit from it. Nick Appleyard had collected some wealth, hadn't he?

Bennet At least 60 pounds. Well, Dick, can you read what it says?

Dick The verses are not too good, but their message doesn't sound too good.

Bennet For whom?

Dick For any of us.
Bennet Read!
Dick (reads) "I had four black arrows under my belt,
Four for the griefs that I have felt,
Four for the number of ill men
That have oppressed me now and then.

One is gone, one is well sped;
Old Appleyard is dead.

One is for master Bennet Hatch,
That burned Grimstone, walls and hatch,

One for Sir Oliver Oates,
That cut Sir Harry Shelton's throat.

Sir Daniel, you shall have the fourth;
We shall think it fair sport.

Ye shall each have your own part,
A black arrow in each black heart.
Get ye to your knees for to pray:
ye are dead thieves, by yea and nay.

John Amend-All of the Green Wood
and his jolly fellowship.

Item, we have more arrows and good hempen cord for others of your following."

Sir Oliver Woe betide us! It must be some misunderstanding!

Bennet Is it, Sir Oliver? You are mentioned yourself.

Sir Oliver I had nothing to do with it! He didn't even have his throat cut! This is an outrage! I am just an innocent priest!

Bennet It makes no difference, Sir Oliver. The curse is here anyway.

Sir Oliver There are witnesses! There are living witnesses of what happened! I was not even there at Moat House when it happened! I was sent on an errand from there before it was nine o'clock...

Bennet It's time for us to get moving. Dick, make ready. Don't bother about that babbling priest and this curse. It doesn't concern you.

Dick But it does concern you, and obviously Sir Oliver was present in the circumstances of my father's death. I would like to hear more about it eventually.

Bennet We have to split. Ten men will escort Sir Oliver to Moat House, and I will command of the other ten. You must take the long way across the bridge. If you

are attacked, just spurn the spurs and ride on. Whatever you do, don't come back here. Who knows if we'll ever see each other again. Some good advice on the way: trust neither Sir Daniel nor Sir Oliver. Keep careful observation of Sir Daniel. He only thinks of his gold and would sacrifice anyone for it and doesn't care who governs the country as long as he can profit by it whoever it is. Sir Oliver is his instrument and accomplice. Make other friends wherever you come and preferably as powerful as possible. So far your reputation is good with everyone, keep it that way, and don't press the case of your father too far until you have to. Good luck, my boy!

Dick We'll surely meet again.

Bennet But if they would send an arrow in my back, those hopelessly wronged outcasts, then think of me and feel welcome to contribute a pound for a death mass for my poor soul, since I will have a hard time in purgatory.

Dick Good luck yourself, Bennet. *(They embrace.)*

Bennet Go now. And hurry. *(Dick leaves.)*

First woman If only the king could get back his full mental capacities, so that we could have order in the country again!

Farmer No king was ever sensible but only allowed himself to be governed by interests he couldn't control. Our king understood that from the beginning and has therefore never been in power.

First woman Shut up, you poor wise guy! Let's go home before the war strikes the village again!

Bennet And you, Sir Oliver, will have to take care of the body.

Sir Oliver A mass is the least we can offer him, the scarred veteran. *(employs a few men to help him, and Appleyard is carried out.)*

Bennet That arrow knew where to strike, and three black arrows are already sharpened, and we don't even know where they come from. They are many who have been harmed beyond repair without right in this civil war, and we who have profited by their misfortunes have more enemies than we can tell. One of them, the most anonymous of them all, has simply had enough. *(walks out after the others. Chimes start tolling as a signal for a mass for the dead.)*

Scene 2. The inn.

(It's night, and people are sleeping around Sir Daniel on benches or on the floor, his warriors or servants, wrapped up in their cloaks, with a sleeping boy at his feet in a red cloak, while he himself is keeping court with a large mug of beer in his hand by the table in front of the open fire.)

Sir Daniel Listen to me, host. Don't obey any other man than me, and you will have a good life, for I am a good master to those who serve me.

Host Naturally there is never any question of obeying any other man.

Sir Daniel I must have reliable people for my group of ten. Make Adam-a-More sheriff here. Those Walsinghams must be eliminated, and you have served them.

Host That was long ago. They pay nothing, as they are poor as church rats.

Sir Daniel And still they make trouble and want so called exoneration, as if you could get any legal right without money. (*The boy is moving.*) So, it's time to wake up now, master John.

John (*suddenly sits up and looking around in dismay*)

Sir Daniel Here, my boy! Here I am! (*John reluctantly comes up to him. Sir Daniel bursts out laughing.*) That's what I call a good boy!

John Is it my unfortunate circumstances that make you laugh at me?

Sir Daniel Not at all. I am just cheerful by nature. You would also laugh if you could see yourself.

John Sir Daniel, you shall answer for this and for everything else. Laugh while you can.

Sir Daniel No, dear cousin, don't take it so seriously. I am not laughing at you. I will make you happily and richly married, so you shall not remain in awkwardness. Just take it easy. That I took you by force was just regular procedure – that's how they do in these troublesome times. I promise to cherish you tenderly and insure a life in safety for you – you shall be Mrs Shelton, wife of my ward, the finest young man I know. He will treat you better than I. And a good laugh is good for prolonging life. Only wicked men don't laugh, and I am not wicked, only a man of my time. Host, give the boy some food.

John Thank you, I am not hungry. (*enter Dick Shelton with some men*)

Sir Daniel Hello there, my favourite Dick! You come like by order! You were the only one missing here! Join the party and celebrate! All the others are put out.

Dick I bring you some news from the priest. Something has occurred in Tunstall, which is threatened.

Sir Daniel Sit down and take it easy! Here is some food for you. What has happened then?

Dick (*delivers Sir Oliver's letter*) Risingham is also under threat. They sorely miss your presence.

Sir Daniel (*reads, grows sullen*) Dick, have you read these verses?

Dick Yes.

Sir Daniel Your father is mentioned, and our poor vicar is accused of having murdered him.

Dick He denied it more than emphatically.

Sir Daniel Of course. He couldn't do otherwise. Don't mind him. He prattles like a magpie. One day when I get time I will myself put you into the entire situation. A man called Ellis Duckworth was accused of the deed, but the times were difficult, and it was impossible to implement justice. That's the advantage and disadvantage of war and civil war: all law and order and right are abrogated.

Dick It happened in Moat House, didn't it?

Sir Daniel It happened between Moat House and Holywood. Hurry on with the supper. You will ride back to Tunstall with a message from me.

Dick I beg you to send someone else. I will be needed now in the fight, as they now are getting started for real.

Sir Daniel I have no doubt about it, but there is no glory for you to gain there. Myself I will stay here in Kettleby and wait. Call it cowardice if you want, but it is only common sense. After the battle you can better judge what is right or wrong, when you see who has won. People change sides every day, since the force of government changes hands equally often, and no one can be sure of what counts tomorrow. The game is for irresponsible adventurers, while the wise man stays outside looking on. Now I will write the letter of answer.

(When Sir Daniel's attention is elsewhere, John carefully dares to steal up to Dick.)

John (with a finger on his lips) Hush! Could you tell me the closest way to Holywood?

Dick Just follow the path past the windmill and down to the ferry. There you can ask again.

John Thank you.

Dick Are you in trouble?

John Hush! I must get away. *(steals away)*

Sir Daniel There! The letter is finished! You'll ride to Moat House with it. Hurry on. *(Dick leaves.)* Where the devil is the girl?

Host What girl?

Sir Daniel The boy then, who was with me? He in the red cloak, who only wanted to drink water! Has she run away, clout?

Host Master John? Yes, he left. I saw him ride a horse and disappear.

Sir Daniel She was worth five hundred pounds for me! Well, we shall overtake her later. Back to the war and the party! The rule is to come too late to the war and in good time for the party, so the war will have to wait. We'll send six men for the girl instead. Wake up, you sluggards! Follow the girl, she cannot have reached very far, and catch her whatever the cost! When I reach Moat House she must be there! Understood?

Soldiers Ay ay, Sir!

Sir Daniel Let's march then! *(Exeunt all except the host.)*

Scene 3.

(A neighing horse.)

Dick A horse caught in the mud and dying. The young man must have met with some trouble. But where is he?

John (peeping out through some rushes) Tsst! Master Shelton!

Dick Are you there? Come out, and let me see you! You abandoned your horse when he was stuck in the marsh, so I had to put an arrow through his head to cut his dying pain short. You should have done that.

John I am not drilled in using weapons. I didn't know what to do, since they are chasing me.

Dick Come out properly, so that we can speak! What's the matter with you? Why are they chasing you?

John Alas, I am completely lost! I lost my way and lost my horse and have even lost my cloak, and now I am completely at a loss and all wet also!

Dick To be wet is only natural. Who does not get rained through every day here in England? Come! Let's light a fire, and then you'll have to explain yourself. *(takes "him" under his cloak and starts preparing a camp)*

John (when he has settled and relaxed) I am on my way to Holywood to find protection there with the abbot to get away from a man who wants to oppress me.

Dick Sir Daniel?

John He has abducted me from home and forced me to dress up in these clothes and then cruelly made fun of me all the time. When my men chased him to liberate me he made me sit at the back to dress the shots, and I was hit in my foot. Since then I am limping. But I will get him! One day justice will catch up with him!

Dick Undoubtedly. But you might have to wait for long. Sir Daniel is an undefeatable warrior with iron hands and more clever than anyone in the government. If he knew that I was taking care of you, I would probably end up in very much trouble.

John I know that you are his ward, just as he claims that I am, but he collects people to make dependent on him only to make money of it, and he uses his position of power only for oppression. Haven't you noticed?

Dick Not yet, but I know that I cannot trust him.

John By the way, call me John Matcham. All I ask of you is to help me reach Holywood.

Dick Of course. I pledge my life to bring you there in security.

John But how? We have only got one horse.

Dick You may ride it with your damaged foot. I will run along.

John It's a long way.

Dick If I get tired we'll simply stop and rest. But we'll get there.

John Then I trust you.

Dick Right. Come, let's go. We have no time to lose, if Sir Daniel sends his hoodlums after you. *(They make ready for departure.)*

Scene 4. Grimstone.

Lawless (stirring the pot) Exiled and outlawed you are still free, and freedom is more worth than all the riches and vanity there is in town for the destruction of all humanity. In nature you are poor, exposed and stripped of all illusions about the false security of resources but instead free and clear in your mind and in perfect control of your integrity, independence and sovereignty.

John (stealing up with Dick and hiding without being noticed) What bad luck we had by the ferry place!

Dick It was no one's fault. It was Swamp-John that made trouble. We were lucky to get away alive.

John But the horse perished.

Dick Swamp-John fired at us and hit the horse so the ferry turned over. They have only themselves to blame. If we are lucky we'll now do without your persecutors, if they can't use the ferry.

John They will probably use the bridge instead. But the ferryman's words that Sir Daniel's days are counted made an impression. Do you think something is going on? Here we can learn something. Watch out! *(They crouch as a group of men enters.)*

Ellis Things are looking better, boys! Six bowmen have arrived at the ferry dressed in Sir Daniel's colours. They will be our next target. Not one of them will get through the woods alive! We are here more than fifty strong free men, all with more than one injustice to avenge! We have all lost either our property and goods or friends and relatives by Sir Daniel's violent greed, and we have only begun our retaliation! Appleyard was only the introduction!

Lawless Master Ellis, you only think of revenge and have reasons enough, but the most important thing is still our exoneration. We are all outlawed but have no higher wish than to once be able to live in peace again with our human rights restored. Can you see any end at all to the constantly increasing and worsening vicious circle of violence?

Ellis That's why we must concentrate on the snake's head, which is Sir Daniel. His position is unassailable by its massive systematic corruption of the whole county, but the more important it is that the source of the poison to the snake's head is cut off. If we are lucky he will also try to find his way through the woods, but now we must take our positions. Remember, none of the six knights must escape alive!

Dick (to John) If I know Sir Daniel correctly he will take another way than his men. He is too sly for the outlaws.

Ellis I promise you, brother Lawless, that if I only get the necessary revenge for Harry Shelton, Simon Malmsbury and one more carried through, all my effort after that will be to restore our rights.

Lawless The third one must be yourself?

Ellis Who else? To horse! Take your positions! We have an important day's work ahead!

John (to Dick) Do you think they will succeed?

Dick Of course they will succeed. But they will not get Sir Daniel. Come, let's see how it works out! *(They steal away while the outlaws break up.)*

Lawless Poor Sir Daniel and his men! They have no chance. What are they doing in the woods anyway? They must be aware they are walking into a death trap! Well, that's their own business. They are Sir Daniel's men, and that's how it goes and ends when you just blindly obey orders. *(finishes his cooking)*

Scene 5. In the woods. Dick and John wake up at dawn in a hollow.

Dick Have we quarrelled enough now?

John I hope so.

Dick Can you forgive me?

John Never. I have seen you kill a man. I could never do that myself, and I can't understand how anyone could do it.

Dick Then you are more of a woman than of a man.

John Don't say so.

Dick You must understand me. Sir Daniel has been like a father to me instead of the one I lost.

John But Sir Daniel was the one who killed him!

Dick How do you know?

John I heard it from many sources.

Dick You exaggerate. The day when it is proved that Sir Daniel killed him I will myself kill Sir Daniel, although he has been like a father to me and raised me a warrior.

John He raised you to be his hoodlum.

Dick No, I am first of all in the service of the crown.

John A crown which Sir Daniel constantly betrays.

Dick How do you know?

John Everybody knows. When York is victorious he becomes a York man. When Lancaster is victorious he fawns to the king again. He is an unscrupulous weathercock who profits by the cost of the innocent victims of the war.

Dick It may be so, but I had to kill that man.

John You didn't have to at all.

Dick He aimed at me.

John But he never fired. He wanted to spare you, but you refused to spare him, although he was unknown to you and you had no reason or cause to kill him.

Dick There is a civil war going on. Indirectly you will be six times more guilty as an accomplice, since you stopped me from saving those that were sent out.

John For that you should be happy and grateful. They were Sir Daniel's men sent out to hunt me, and Sir Daniel is your own father's murderer.

Dick Here we go again. *(a small chiming bell is heard)* Quiet! What is it?

John Someone goes around sounding a small bell. It's no cow.

Dick No, he moves too quickly, as if he was on his guard and on the run.

John He is coming closer.

Dick Anyway, he is a loner and nothing to fear, perhaps even a monk or hermit.

John I see him! Goodness! He has no face!

(The 'leper' enters covered in a cloak from head to foot and even with his face covered by a white cloth.)

Dick A leper!

John Do you think he has seen us?

Dick He walks with a stick. He is blind. Look how he gropes his way with the stick.

John It feels anyway as if he saw us, as if he saw right through us.

Dick I admit it's a bit uncanny.

John He has seen us! I know it!

Dick Now he passes on. The danger is over.

John The mere touch by such a person could mean a prolonged and unendurably painful death.

Dick I don't think it's as contagious as people try to make it by their prejudice and superstition, but the illness is the worst imaginable. This poor man can never again have any human relationship.

John He is coming back! I hear the bell again!

Dick Now it's quiet.

John It's him! He walks straight at us and holds the clapper!

Dick So he sees us. Something here is not right. – Halt, leprous man! Don't come any closer!

The leper (stops and removes his mask) Don't be alarmed. It's only me.

Dick and John Sir Daniel!

Sir Daniel Pardon the disguise, but it is unfortunately necessary. I am in disgrace. The battle of Risingham is lost, and we must run for our lives. Now everyone is chasing me, and my only possible refuge is Moat House, where I am heading. It's not far. Come after me there. You are under my protection.

Dick What does it mean, Sir Daniel? Have you lost all your men? Will you be a York man again?

Sir Daniel That duke of York does not deserve his progress, but I have no other choice. I was hoping to meet my six chosen men here in the woods.

Dick They are all dead.

Sir Daniel What?

Dick They fell one after the other ambushed by the outlaws. I came too late to be able to warn them and could regrettably not save them.

Sir Daniel Then I have only ten men left. Hard times and tidings! That damned Ellis Duckworth! I made him a beggar, drove him from his home, burnt his farm and chased him out of the country, and then he comes back and has the insolence to openly declare that he is going to kill me! It's an outrageous unmatched impertinence! But I shall get him! This time he will not get away!

Dick We were close to get caught by the outlaws ourselves.

Sir Daniel At Moat House you are safe. You are welcome there. It's not pleasant to live as an outcast in the woods. Have you been sleeping here tonight?

Dick Yes.

Sir Daniel In this hollow? It could have been made your grave.

Dick That's how it felt when you approached us, Sir Daniel.

Sir Daniel As a leper or when I unmasked myself? (*grinning*)

John Both.

Sir Daniel There is no reason for fear now for me. The danger is over. They will never get to Moat House.

Dick Who are 'they'?

Sir Daniel Those who keep the civil war going. Come on now. It's a straight path.
(*goes ahead and leaves*)

Dick I don't think there is any danger, John.

John Something tells me it will be difficult to get out alive from Moat House.

Dick We'll make it, I am sure. We did make it all the way so far. (*They leave after Sir Daniel.*)

Act II scene 1. Moat House.

Sir Daniel, Bennet Hatch and Sir Oliver Oates.

Sir Daniel I am worried about the boy. He risks everything by asking too many questions.

Bennet Still I warned him. He can't go on like that.

Sir Daniel Did the dying Carter say anything?

Bennet He appears to have threatened him by refusing to let in the priest to receive the last confession and unction, and still he refused to say anything.

Sir Daniel He goes too far.

Bennet Yes, he goes too far.

Sir Daniel I must make an ultimatum. He must realize and understand that he can never have any clear answers to the question.

Bennet The risk is as long as he doesn't get any, that he will continue asking questions and never know more than one or other detail, which only will urge him to go on.

Sir Daniel That's what we must have an end of. Or else it will be the worse for him. An ultimatum is the only possible remedy. There is nothing else to do. Will he never come?

Bennet Patience, Sir Daniel. He is summoned, so he will come.

Dick (enters) You called me, Sir Daniel. Here I am.

Sir Daniel That was about time. You worry us, Dick. You cause concern and irritation. You have even tortured the dying Carter with your questions.

Dick I wanted answers, especially since no one seems willing to give them.

Sir Daniel There is nothing to answer. Your father is dead since fifteen years, and there's an end on it. You will gain nothing on trying to dig him up except some towering garbage of only worms.

Dick But his spirit seems to be uneasy since the mere mentioning of his name appears to make people panic.

Sir Daniel Not with us who knew him. He was a man of honour who always kept his word and never failed his loyalty, but you seem to be willing to set everything

rocking and thereby risk all we have done for you by opening and spreading salt in old wounds. It will not do. It is ungrateful and irresponsible.

Dick You have always been like a father to me, Sir Daniel, and I never failed in my loyalty to you. I actually tried to save your six men who were lost in the Tunstall forest, but I was powerless against the sly tactics of the cunning men of the forest, since they kept consistently invisible, and your men were surrounded from the start.

Sir Daniel Exactly, my dear Dick. We are hard pressed. The king has probably lost his last battle, and all my men are beaten with him. The duke of York has banned and outlawed me, and the bother to try to regain his grace will take a very long time. At the same time we have this forest plot against the lives of all of us with outlawed murderers swarming in the bushes who only live to have us massacred. We are in safety here, but then we don't need anyone going around destabilizing the security and morale by spreading anxieties and false rumours.

Dick That's the last thing I wish to do. I only want to know the truth.

Bennet Do you believe more in loose accusations by a cowardly fired black anonymous killer arrow than in what your benefactor assures you of?

Dick If only you could do that, but you just keep evading the issue.

Sir Daniel How can we make you trust our word?

Dick Swear yourselves innocent. It's easy.

Sir Daniel Well, Dick, I swear myself innocent. I swear that I had nothing to do with the murder of your father. Is that enough?

Dick You were never directly pointed out by the black arrow, but Sir Oliver was.

Sir Daniel Well, Sir Oliver? Obviously you must also swear.

(Howls outside.)

What's happening? Run out, Dick, and find out what is going on. *(Dick disappears.)*

You must swear, Oliver. You have no choice.

Sir Oliver It's a terrible oath. You can swear your souls to hell if you want, and no one can stop you, that's your own affair, but I am a priest!

Sir Daniel No matter. I don't think there is any hell to be afraid of. If you must lie for the common good, you must. It's politics. I still need Dick for my purposes. Until he is of age I have the right to give him away in marriage, and it could be sold dearly, but if he fails me I must dump him. Either he is convinced of our innocence in his father's unfortunate demise, or I must lodge him in the room above the chapel.

Sir Oliver No, anything, but not that!

Sir Daniel The choice is yours, Oliver. I will leave you alone with him but will guard you through the tapistry. His life depends on you. Stay calm and convince him. *(Dick returns.)* Well, what was it?

Dick There was a black arrow landing in the court with a message.

Sir Daniel What message?

Dick I think it was for me.

Sir Daniel What did it say?

Dick "Forced into the lair."

Sir Daniel Listen, Dick. Either you trust us and our innocence, or else you leave here and join the outlaws. We can't have suspicious demoralising defaitists in here under the present circumstances. It's your own choice. I leave you here alone with Sir Oliver. (*leaves*)

Dick (alone with the priest) Well, Sir Oliver, can you swear yourself innocent?

Sir Oliver I should be angry with you for at all questioning our honesty and honour, but I feel for you and agree to swear the oath for your own sake.

Dick I was already convinced of your innocence when the first black arrow brought the first accusation, but still I must ask you: Did you have no share in his murder?

Sir Oliver I have already sworn that I had absolutely nothing to do with the violence and treason against your father! For your own sake, don't press the matter any further! I must go now. I am not quite well. Be satisfied that I already swore the oath once. Take care. Farewell. (*hurries out*)

Dick Whatever does he mean? His manner of swearing the oath was all too convincing about its falsity. Now I know that both have perjured themselves and that Sir Daniel was involved. But what's that? Someone is watching me by a hole in the tapestry! Overheard! Sir Daniel! Now he knows that I am convinced of their culpability. What will he do about that?

Bennet (enters) Master Dick, you are requested to change room.

Dick Why? I am satisfied with my room as it is.

Bennet The room above the chapel is much finer.

Dick Is that the only reason?

Bennet Don't ask me. Your things have already been moved.

Dick Is there anything special about the room above the chapel?

Bennet Not that I know of, but some claim it is haunted.

Dick Who is haunting it?

Bennet Someone appears to have vanished from there without a trace. I have warned you, master Dick. Take care.

Dick I guess that accounts for all of us.

Bennet Very true. (*takes hold of him when they go out together*) We are all in the same boat, but when there is a civil war going on everyone is stupid enough to try to turn it over.

Scene 2. The room above the chapel.

Dick (enters the room) Why was I given this room? It's much finer than mine, but it is suspect. (*inspects it*) Outside the window there is the moat, above there is the parapet and underneath there is only the chapel. There is certain to be some secret passage around here somewhere. This house is like built for surveillance and espionage. Now there is something happening.

(The sound of many feet. The call: "Password!" The answer "Gloucester". Change of the guards and more trampling of boots.)

You are not stupid enough to go to bed and sleep here, and even if you tried to sleep you would not be able to. But what is it now?

(a cautious knock on the door)

John (outside) Dick! It's me!

Dick John Matcham! At last! *(unlocks the door and lets him in at once and locks the door again)* Where have you been? I have missed you! We haven't seen each other since we arrived here!

John Don't remind me. We are both in constant peril of life here. There are spies everywhere. I hear their steps behind me in the corridors, and I hear them breathe through the tapistries.

Dick Take it easy. Here you are safe for the moment, if anyone can be safe in this house. What have you learned? Where have you been hiding? What is going on?

John Don't you know that they are going to kill you tonight or tomorrow? That's the only reason why you were offered this room.

Dick I thought so. But why? There is no good reason. The constancy in my loyalty to my guardian never broke, so why would he wish to kill me in his own house when he took care of me and brought me up during fifteen years?

John They are afraid of you that you might suspect too much. Do you still believe that Sir Daniel was not the man behind the death of your father?

Dick No, I know now that they killed him. Sir Oliver swore solemnly on the matter and so emphatically that he made it obvious that he knew how it all happened.

John He is as afraid as all the others. Everyone lives in terror of Sir Daniel in here and of the world outside.

Dick Hush! I hear something. *(Sounds are heard under the floor.)*

John Someone walks in the room below.

Dick No. It's in the secret passage. They are coming to murder me. Let them come. I am ready. *(loads his crossbow)*

John Put out all lights. *(Dick does so.)*

(Slowly, slowly a hatch is opened in the floor spreading light, and you see the hand opening it. Dick raises his crossbow to shoot the head that must appear, but then new voices are heard.)

Sir Daniel (at a distance) That damned slut has tried to escape again! Find her! She must be in the castle!

(The hatch closes immediately, and new running steps and noises are heard about.)

Dick They will have much to do tonight.

(Calls are heard everywhere: "Joanna! Joanna!")

Who are they calling for? There is no Joanna here and practically no other woman either. There have hardly been any. Have you heard of anyone?

John Oh yes.

Dick Who is she? What has she done? Was she a prisoner, since she tried to escape?

John Yes, she was a prisoner, but she didn't do anything. On the contrary. She has only been violated.

Dick You seem to know something about it. Have you met her?

John No, but we must both get away from here. If anyone of us is found here it could only mean death. We are finished here.

Dick I understood that already earlier today, but I didn't want to leave the fort until I had seen you and talked some more with Sir Oliver.

Sir Daniel (at a distance) Search everywhere! She could have taken refuge in the room above the chapel!

Dick (suddenly realizing) It's you!

John Yes, I am afraid so. Are you disappointed?

Dick And how you have succeeded in fooling me! I have regarded you as almost a younger brother, unmanly with imperfect limbs, weak and defenceless, whom I must protect and take care of, and then you are a woman!

Joanna Imagine that you didn't realize that earlier.

Dick I must have been blind! But what then is your story?

Joanna We haven't got much time. Sir Daniel abducted me from my real guardian Lord Foxham. Like you I am an orphan but cursed by being rich. Therefore Sir Daniel and Lord Foxham have always had a tug-of-war about the right to give me away in marriage and always overran each other by buying either the right of guardianship over me or the right to get me married. Today I should have been betrothed.

Dick With whom?

Joanna A certain Hamley.

Dick Do you love him?

Joanna I have never seen him, but when I tried to get away from Sir Daniel I wanted to marry him just to spite Sir Daniel. Each time Sir Daniel has put me in harder watch and custody, and then in Tunstall I saw the man he wanted me to marry.

Dick Who was it?

Joanna You.

Dick Fate really brought us together then. Imagine that we suffered such ordeals together in the woods while I always regarded you as a little brother! As such I almost came to love you as much, but now I love you even more.

Joanna It's mutual, Dick.

(Just as they are about to kiss they are interrupted by bangings on the door.)

Sir Daniel (outside) I know she is in there! Open up the door, Dick! Don't pretend to be sleeping!

(pause)

Break the door. They are in there together.

(Suddenly more noise above. New stamping and running feet and eager voices. Something has happened. Silence outside the door. The housebreaking has come off.)

Dick Now something has happened again. It could hardly be any attack. Perhaps reinforcements. Perhaps new fragments of the defeated army that succeeded in reaching the castle in the night.

Joanna Now is our chance of an escape.

Dick Yes. To the hatch! Help me with this bed! We must block the door. *(Together they push the bed to block the door. Then they swiftly depart by the hatch.)* But we need more luck to get out of here alive.

Joanna We have had luck so far. *(They disappear.)*

(Soon the hard work on the door is resumed.)

Sir Daniel Damn! They have barred the door! Use all your might, boys! *(Finally Sir Daniel with a gang of knights succeed in breaking in.)* They are gone! They have escaped! Damn it! But we shall catch them! We only have to carefully check all the secret passages! *(Exeunt all again in anger and disarray.)*

Scene 3. Grimstone.

Ellis Let them be. Let them feel secure in the illusion of safety. We have him now and only need to wait him out. Soon he will get cocky again and dare to ride out with his slaves of bullying knights, and all roads will then be open to him, but then the whole nation will rise. It's only a question of time now. But what is this? *(Enter two of the outlaws carrying Dick who is unconscious.)* Is it the prodigal son who at last has returned home?

Lawless We found him out in the woods. He is badly hurt. The head is torn, and he has had an arrow through his shoulder.

Ellis That would indicate that he risked his life to escape alone out of the castle by running some gauntlet. Wake up, young Shelton! You are at home now!

Dick *(wakes up, weak and confused)* Where am I?

Ellis You have come home at last. You are with Ellis Duckworth, your father's best friend, who has sworn to at last avenge his death. Do you have enough strength to speak? Can you tell us what happened?

Dick We had to leave her in the castle. She couldn't bear the strain. We managed to get out, but she couldn't climb down by the rope. I had to do it alone and fell the last bit. The arrows whirled all around me. I managed to get to the opposite shore, but when I ran I had an arrow in my shoulder. Am I really with friends? Do I have any?

Ellis The best ones you ever had, and who always were your friends since you were born, the outcasts, the outlaws, the humiliated and oppressed and those who always have the right to demand exoneration.

Dick Ellis Duckworth?

Ellis Yes, that's me.

Dick She was left with the established robbers.

Ellis Joanna Sedley, who Sir Daniel abducted from her rightful guardian. We know.

Dick But Sir Daniel acquires more men all the time.

Ellis Don't worry. He is declared a traitor by the duke of York. It wouldn't surprise me if he also has betrayed the poor king. When the Lancaster party is

victorious again he will probably betray his temporary lords again. He is like that. He can only betray. That's what he thrives on.

Dick I think I have some proof here. (*presents a letter*)

Ellis (*reads it and is astounded*) Where did you find it?

Dick Throgmorton. Sir Daniel sent him as a messenger to the duke of York. Your men took him and hanged him. He was dangling in my way when I passed on my escape. Your men did not find the letter. I did.

Ellis We thank you, Dick, for coming like a godsent gift with binding evidence of Sir Daniel's outrageous treason. You are at last at home now with decent people – all of us outlaws were driven from home and farm and land without any right and have even become even more honest as outlaws, for there is nothing else left for us to live for than our honour. Be most welcome.

Dick Thank you, Ellis Duckworth.

Ellis Now take care of his wounds, so that he may become a whole man again.

Dick And the girl?

Ellis We shall not forget her.

Dick I will write a letter to Sir Daniel myself making my position clear.

Ellis That will please him, on my honour!

(*Dick cordially takes his hand, Ellis answers and embraces him. The other outlaws raise their mugs and cheer.*)

The outlaws Dick Shelton has come right! Hurray, hurray!

Act III scene 1. Shoreby. Sir Daniel's house.

Sir Daniel It doesn't matter what you say. It's my legal right to marry you to whomever I please, and under the present circumstances I can assure you, that you shall never be married to Dick, that bastard worm, who has betrayed me and become my mortal enemy after all I have done for him. I will do anything in my power to obstruct his intentions about you and to have him liquidated. He has challenged me and promised to see me dead at any cost before you are led to the altar by anyone else...

Joanna Has he written to you?

Sir Daniel At least he is honest enough to declare his intentions and to make his position clear. That settles it. He is our mortal enemy and already dead to us.

Joanna He will be your mortal enemy, not mine.

Sir Daniel That doesn't help you. You will anyway be married to the earl of Shoreby. That's settled. The deal is made. You will not get away. You will be his sex slave for life.

Joanna You are inhuman!

Sir Daniel No, I only use my legal right, and no one can take it away from me.

Joanna A legal right you acquired by illegal means by robbery, violence and swindle!

Sir Daniel That is of no consequence. The legal right is mine. You shall be married, Joanna Sedley, to the earl of Shoreby...

Joanna That villain!

Sir Daniel And your dear Dick will not be able to stop it but rather have an arrow in his back before me.

Joanna Don't be too sure!

Sir Daniel Yes, I am sure. Your Dick is outcast and outlawed. He has no human right left in the world. *(She bursts out crying and throws herself on the bed.)* Yes, cry your heart out. As lady Shoreby you are likely to dry up in languishment. The main thing is that I get my money for you. Nothing else matters, for the whole world is hopelessly rotten to the core anyway, and few people nowadays deserve to live at all. That's why we have the civil war, like a well needed natural curse for cleansing of all rotten eggs. The wise ones will get richer by it. The others will perish and liberate the world from their worthless presence. Cry on, Joanna. Cry as long as you can until you are as dry as an old spinster. *(leaves and closes the door behind him.)*

(Enter after a while her friend with caution.)

Alicia Tsst, Joanna!

Joanna (collects herself, looks up) What is it?

Alicia A friend has come for a visit. *(shows in Dick disguised as a Franciscan monk. He immediately removes his hood.)*

Joanna Dick!

Dick (hurries in her lap) My beloved! All our efforts to liberate you have failed, but we will never give up.

Joanna I will be married tomorrow in the chapel here below.

Dick All powers of heaven will rise against it.

Joanna Do you think that helps?

Dick It just must not happen.

Joanna But it will happen.

Dick Let's see about that.

Joanna If we live.

Dick We must live. For each other. We have nothing else to live for.

Joanna You are right. Everything else is just causes to kill for, for the king and York, and Sir Daniel kills for money.

Dick I must go. We must stop a blasphemous and unnatural wedding.

Joanna Do you think you can do it?

Dick I have all lawless friends on my side.

Alicia You will not get out of here. No one is let out in the curfew. Your only possible way is through the chapel, where the wedding shall be tomorrow. Someone's corpse is lying there, so there is a vigil. You can join the brothers.

Joanna Sir Oliver is there.

Dick Then at last I may see and speak with him again. This could be a golden opportunity.

Alicia Or the contrary, a death trap. Take care and no risks.

Dick (embraces Joanna one last time and kisses her) I just wanted to remind you that I exist.

Joanna Do you think I have ever forgotten it?

Dick You never can be too sure. Now I am sure.

Joanna Whatever happens tomorrow I am yours.

Dick Your groom has had a warning by the black arrow. He knows the risk he is taking if he tries to carry through the wedding.

Joanna Then I hope for his own sake that he backs off.

Dick Yes. One last kiss... *(They kiss)* Wish me good luck.

Joanna With all my heart and all my soul. *(Dick disappears.)*

Alicia He will succeed with everything. He will ultimately have you.

Joanna But it looks bad.

Alicia It always does for the moment.

Scene 2. The chapel. The vigil.

(Some brothers gathered around the coffin. Sir Oliver is one of them. Dick, covered by his hood like all the others, kneels beside him, buffs him gently)

Sir Oliver What is it?

Dick It's Dick.

Sir Oliver (terrified) Dick! You come like a damnation!

Dick I must get out of here.

Sir Oliver Impossible. I know why you are here. You can't stop the wedding. Since I know who you are I can't impossibly let you go before the wedding is over, but you must sit here quietly all night. Then when the wedding is over I can let you go in peace. That's all I can do for you. You must believe me. I had nothing to do with your father's death.

Dick How were you involved then?

Sir Oliver You are sent for a mission which you don't know what it is about. I plead guilty to having lured your father to his death, but I did not know that I did. It showed afterwards to my eternal horror. Do you believe me?

Dick I believe you.

Sir Oliver Thanks for that. In return I will do what I can to save your life. But you must keep still. If you try to mess up the wedding you are lost.

Dick Thank you, Sir Oliver. I will not try to influence the wedding in any way.

Sir Oliver Just sit here quite still. I promise not to tell Sir Daniel that you are here. It would raise the devil in the church if I did.

Dick Thank you, Sir Oliver. *(Oliver leaves.)*

So I am locked up here and forced to witness the wedding between my own and one of the worst crooks in the country. You could have it better. Sir Oliver means well but is rather stupid and can't see what is good for him.

Lawless (enters, also disguised as a monk, takes a seat beside Dick) Ellis is here.

Dick Back?

Lawless Yes. He has sworn to stop the abominable marriage.

Dick You light a hope in my heart and save my life. Then all gods are not entirely dead.

Lawless But Sir Oliver is with Sir Daniel.

Dick I know. He has promised not to betray me.

Lawless Do you believe in him?

Dick Do I have any choice? I simply have to. You will also not get out of here. There is a curfew, and no one is let out.

Lawless I know. It's that dwarf in that coffin. He was spying for Sir Daniel. Someone struck a knife in him.

Dick I know. It was I.

Lawless Did he discover you?

Dick No, I discovered him. He was peeping and watching Joanna.

Lawless Serves him right.

Dick I found on him an interesting letter which he never had time to deliver to the duke of York, in which our celebrated knight declares his change of sides.

Lawless Yet another treason.

Dick I left a note on the dwarf's body with a black arrow and a warning to the lord not to marry Joanna.

Lawless Do you think he will heed the warning?

Dick No.

Lawless All the worse for him.

Dick We'll see. We are stuck here. Whatever happens we will not be accomplices, but we will be the more closer as witnesses.

Lawless It will be exciting to see Ellis Duckworth's wedding presents.

(They lean back, relax and sleep. Blackout. Gradually the day breaks, and people start coming to church. Pleasant wedding music. Guests of high standing. Sir Daniel dressed up in his most magnificent attire, receives his guests with great courtesy and is at his most agreeable like a true nobleman and appears fully satisfied and proud in enjoying his day.

Then enter the wedding people, a brilliant festive procession with lord Shoreby shining like a peacock, Joanna pale and nervous at his side, rather frightened. Sir Daniel greets them with his most genial generosity and honours the lord with royal courtesy. He resumes his pew, and the couple approaches the altar, where also Sir Oliver, who is to wed them, has dressed up and appears as worthy as possible, almost like a bishop, but has some difficulty in concealing that he is nervous.

The couple is about to reach the altar, the music comes to an end, and the priest is about to start the ceremony, when suddenly four masked men dressed in green appear on the gallery above and send four arrows. Two pierce the lord, who dies instantly, one touches Sir Daniel's face, and the fourth hits him in his left underarm. Total chaos breaks out at once, but the four bowmen are instantly gone.)

Sir Daniel (bawls) Arrest the murderers!

Sir Oliver Too late. But young Richard Shelton here could know something about it.

Sir Daniel Dick! The unhung outlawed arch traitor and blasphemously disguised in a monk's robe! Of course he must be the one who stands behind the entire conspiracy! He had the motive! He has claimed Joanna's hand himself!

Dick (calmly) If anyone here is a traitor and especially against me, it's Sir Daniel Brackley. I came here in peace without any evil intentions at all, which Sir Oliver Oates can bear witness of who received me on the condition that I sought asylum, which the church owes me if I insist on it. It's true that I loved and proposed to Joanna Sedley, but that is no crime. Also her rightful guardian, who lies wounded in another place, has confirmed that I am her rightful husband to be, since the one who was before has given up his pretensions. This tragically murdered bridegroom was forced upon the bride with violation by Sir Daniel Brackley, who also has abducted Joanna Sedley and acquired the right by force to give her away in marriage.

Sir Daniel I brought you up! I gave you everything, and you have only thanked me by the basest and most malevolent treason in the world! I have nourished a snake by my heart, who now is poisoning England to death!

Dick Do you have a heart, Sir Daniel? Perhaps you had a heart before you murdered my father, which you did only for money, in the same way as you only accepted the guardianship over me for the sake of worldly gains, just to get at my inherited fortune. It is true that you gave me a life and a thorough education with the assistance of the good Sir Oliver Oates, and I was always grateful for that, and I was always loyal until they tried to kill me, when I first started to investigate my father's death. I hereby accuse you of the murder of my father and to have taken possession of my homestead and tax income, openly in the face of the holy church and its community, which I hereby apply as an asylum for my protection according to my right.

Sir Daniel (bawling) He is outlawed! He has no right of speech!

Lord Risingham My good Sir, if you pardon my observation, but your own heated passion speaks somewhat against you.

Joanna (throws herself on her knees to him embracing his knees) Your grace, I am here as that man's prisoner. (*points at Sir Daniel*) He abducted me from my own, and since then the only one who tried to help me with kindness and comfort has been Richard Shelton, whom now Sir Daniel wants to destroy at any cost. If he visited my house yesterday it was at my special request, and he had no evil intentions. While he thought Sir Daniel to be a good guardian for him he fought loyally for him against the men of the Black Arrow, but when Sir Daniel later tried to murder him he had to escape to save his life, and he had nowhere to go but to seek protection among the outcasts. If he has happened to bad company, who is then guilty, the boy who was brutally treated by his guardian, or the guardian who betrayed his guardianship by law?

Dick I give myself up as your prisoner, Sir, and appeal to your grace and justice as a nobleman.

Alicia (also falls on her knees to the lord) I can warrant that my friend speaks the truth. It was I who let him in our house at her request.

Risingham Sir Daniel, this appears to be a complicated case that calls for an investigation. Richard Shelton has the right to appeal for asylum in the holy church but gives up that right by giving himself up to me. He is therefore my prisoner and no one else's. Take care of him, my men! (*Some of his men take care of Dick and brings him out.*) Concerning your ward, who by your will today should have been married against her will, there appear to be some questions about how you have managed your legal guardianship. We will come back to that later. Now you had better go home and dress your wounds. We are finished here. Let the church take care of the bodies. Two in twenty-four hours is a remarkable number. Sir Oliver Oates, you will have much to do.

Sir Oliver I am afraid so. The evil times mess things up for us.

Risingham Blame the bad times. Is then not man himself responsible?

Scene 3.

Lawless We will probably hang together, Dick.

Dick I think so too. We have hardly anything else to take for granted.

Lawless It was great fun while it lasted.

Dick On the other hand, there is an end to all miseries.

Lawless The only good end is that which continues in spite of all.

Dick Do you call that a good end?

Risingham (*enters*) Lawless, as you call yourself, you might have forgotten yourself that you once might have had an honourable name, you have been caught red-handed as one of the outlaws dressed up as a monk, and you knew about the plans of the outlaws but did nothing to stop the bloodbath disaster in church. There is no hope for you. Take him out!

Lawless I am innocent!

Risingham My friend, you might be innocent even of your own lawlessness, which doesn't make you any less outlawed. Your crimes by robberies and attacks are well documented since twenty years. Take him out! (*He is brought out.*)

Richard Shelton, I knew your father as an unimpeachable man, why I must give you a chance. But you have a load of accusations against you. You associate with robbers and murderers. There is proof you have made war against the king. You are suspect for having stolen a ship in piracy. You have been discovered disguised in your enemy's house. A man was murdered on the same evening.

Dick Allow me to account for that murder. Here is the evidence for my having committed it. (*brings a letter from his pocket*)

Risingham (*opens it, reads it and is astounded*) Have you read it?

Dick Yes.

Risingham Are you for York or Lancaster?

Dick Honestly speaking, I never took sides for either party. I presume I am for York.

Risingham So you don't know. The only sensible ones in the civil war are those who stay out of it. Obviously you have been involved in it without understanding it, which is understandable in view of your youth. But do you realize what this letter means?

Dick It means that lord Shoreby, who officially is of the king's party, has betrayed him and crossed over to York.

Risingham And why do you show it to me?

Dick Shouldn't all traitors be revealed, whoever they betray?

Risingham You are right. What most speaks against you though is that your guardian Sir Daniel expressly demands your instantaneous hanging as a traitor against both benefactor as well as church and crown, and he is a mighty ally and indispensable force on the side of the king and our party. His word weighs heavy.

Dick Does it? (*presents a new letter. Risingham accepts it not without hesitation.*) Is his steadfastness really so unimpeachable? Hasn't he changed sides exactly as many times as fortune and the initiative have changed in this war?

Risingham There is something to what you say, but lately he has been admirably faithful to the house of Lancaster. Even during our latest adversities when Risingham was lost he stood firm. But what is this? (*has opened the letter and is astounded*) Have you read this one as well?

Dick Yes.

Risingham Do you understand what it means?

Dick It is all too clear. It's your lordship's own estates he is offering lord Wensleydale of the York party.

Eisingham It's an outrage! It's an abyss of insidiousness! It's a knife in the back of Lancaster, struck by one of the Queen's most trusted knights! My son, what can I do for you? I have no other choice than to give you your freedom under these new sensational circumstances that turn the very reality as we know it or thought we knew it upside down and topsy-turvy. But what more can I do for you?

Dick Liberate the poor brother Lawless.

Risingham My dear Dick, now you make trouble. He is an incurable knave who has forfeited his life since twenty years. He is a professional criminal and know no other art than to murder and rob and cheat people of their money.

Dick He is actually a former Franciscan friar who was forced to abandon his monastery when the abbot found him out in discovering that abbot's own embezzlements. He fought with the brave king Henry in France and even fought against the famous virgin of Orleans.

Risingham Was she a witch or not?

Dick I can't judge that. I wasn't there. All I know is that she was only eighteen years old and was burned because she dressed in men's clothes. Is that a crime? Should Sir Daniel burn his ward Joanna Sedley for the same outrageous crime?

Risingham No, he should not. He shall be relieved of all his guardianships and be brought to trial for high treason. All his power and glory, boasting and bullying is just a false bubble of soap that now has burst. He is more worthless than your

outlawed friend Lawless, who in comparison is an honest man. Take your friend and leave. Vanish far away from here until we have brought the chapter of Sir Daniel Brackley to an end, the worst crook of all. But be careful. Live underground with the outlaws for some more time.

Dick As you wish, my lord.

Risingham It has been a pleasure meeting you and making your acquaintance. You are like your father. I hope we'll meet again in the future.

Dick We will probably do so, my lord.

Risingham Go now. Lawless is expecting you. He knows the ways. (*Dick leaves.*)

What an infamous arch villain we all the time have favoured in the highest circles of government! He has all the time planned to betray the entire army to the insidious York family just for power and greed! He has set himself over the law and social order and manipulated them arbitrarily just to get more money and power for himself! What a monster of a sanctimonious traitor! And it needed an innocent boy who understands nothing of politics to unmask him by innocently becoming himself a victim to him! This bodes no good for the house of Lancaster.

Act IV scene 1.

Joanna What is happening? What are those cries and noises from town?

Alicia Apparently it is under attack. It is burning.

Joanna What shall we do?

Alicia There is not much we can do.

Sir Daniel (brutally breaking in) Make ready for evacuation. The duke of Gloucester is here with an army that has taken the town with surprise. We have no chance. It's just for us to leave.

Alicia Is the town without defence?

Sir Daniel's Your uncle's counter attacks are feeble.

Alicia Are you letting him down, Sir Daniel?

Sir Daniel No, I am saving my own skin.

Alicia And leaving him and the town to their destiny?

Sir Daniel You are welcome to stay here and perish with the town if that's your preference. After its subjugation it will be plundered. I offer you a safe escort if you follow me. If you stay here you can expect no security.

Alicia And my uncle?

Sir Daniel He will defend the city until he falls. Nothing can save him.

Joanna We have no choice, Alicia. We follow you, Sir Daniel, if you take us to Hollywood.

Sir Daniel That's exactly where I had intended to go. I have supported the house of Lancaster all too long. I should have changed sides long ago, but I never had any answer from the duke of York. He has either forgotten me or ignored me. Now I go

down with the sinking house of Lancaster. At best I could save something with me to France. Holywood is now the only safe place for me until further.

Joanna Are you coming, Alicia?

Alicia If the choice is between staying in town while it is being sacked and risk violation and rape and perhaps murder, we really have no other choice. Sir Daniel, we must reluctantly trust you.

Sir Daniel For one time's sake you are being sensible, my ladies. I have promised you security, and I will warrant it all the way to Holywood. What follows there no one could know anything about.

Joanna Very well, Sir Daniel. We are ready.

Scene 2. A tavern in the middle of the destruction.

Lawless You have made your career, Dick. You have been knighted. You have with excellence taken part in the ravagement of the town with all its women. You decided the battle of Shoreby by holding up the barricades. Sir Daniel's house is looted and ruined. Doesn't it feel wonderful?

Dick Sir Daniel and the ladies were gone.

Lawless He has lost everything, and you have lost everything. Now you are equal, but he has brought with him your lady. Lord Risingham, who should have been your new benefactor, is dead, executed by the successful humpback Richard of Gloucester, the next king of England, if he gets what he wants, and you helped him to victory. Doesn't it feel wonderful?

Dick Stop it.

Lawless You are so young, Dick, so young and green and innocent. You know nothing and suspect nothing but start gradually to grow up and realize the false meaning of life, which is only the seduction by the sweet poetry of lies, which constantly leads all the world to hell in constantly new meaningless self-destructive and terrible wars. But you are a knight now, Dick, dubbed by the humpback himself. How does the glorious honour feel?

Dick That's why I am sitting here with you, Lawless, drinking, for you know something about its total emptiness.

Lawless I was with the glorious Henry in France, when he made his son king of Paris. That son I have followed at a distance through all his long tragedy, for he is old now and has like no one else experienced the adversities and successes of life, its ups and downs. He was born the mightiest prince in the world as king of England and France, and that's where his long journey downhill started. His life was just being spoilt to begin with, and that is never rewarding. Then came that farmer girl who liberated France and drove us English out of there with a vengeance, while instead we started fighting each other here at home. It was the haughty duke of York who started questioning the legitimacy of the house of Lancaster, as if his own house could be more legitimate. That's how it started, and since then the War of the Roses

has constantly grown worse, and now it has during thirty years been going on turning the country more savage, while such as Sir Daniel have grown rich and fat as mighty vultures on the constantly growing masses of carrion and opportunities of robbery, while more and more honest people have been forced into exile and lawlessness or death, either by starvation, hanging or falling in battles between brothers, while from this apocalyptic chaos a new power is growing up, the ruthless Richard of Gloucester, who transformed Shoreby into a reeking hell of destruction, plunder, fire and rapes without number, and it made you a knight.

Dick Stop it now.

Lawless I am sorry, brother, but I only pity you. You lost all but have a new glory by the duke of Gloucester, who made you a knight and who undoubtedly will be king after he has cut the necks of both the old feeble-minded king Henry and his promising son Edward. That's all the civil war has taught the invincible duke: to kill and ruthlessly, and that's the only art he knows, and the only activity he will be good for even when we will have peace. Tell me now, my good Dick, wasn't life better as an outlaw?

Dick Yes.

Lawless But the age of lawlessness is over. Now when York is victorious over Lancaster the free brotherhood with its black arrows won't be needed any more, which already killed more than was intended. Ellis Duckworth will have his rights and privileges back, and you will get back your father's properties, and on top of that you are now also a knight and established in the order of the new age. Doesn't it feel wonderful?

Dick It feels, my good brother Lawless, as if we had missed everything on the way.

Lawless Exactly. You are getting grown up. You start to learn and realize something. When we burned that farmer girl in Rouen and lost France I put to myself the question: is this what we have been fighting for in a hundred years? But you still have your girl. Why don't you get away and save her?

Dick That's what I shall do. The duke has given me fifty men to chase Sir Daniel with.

Lawless That sounds good. You still have much to do. Your lady will never fail you, as long as you don't let her down. You can still win her and with her love get out of this social slavery of dependence under political supremacy. Myself I will bewail the loss of my free life as an outlaw for the rest of my life.

Dick We will be back, brother Lawless. I must carry on with the war.

Lawless Yes, join the chase on Sir Daniel and gun him down like a running game. That's all he has left to do in his life: to escape until he falls.

Dick I will be back, Lawless.

Lawless I believe you will. Prodigal sons always come back. *(lays his head on the table and goes to sleep as Dick leaves the place.)*

Act V scene 1. The Tower.

Richard I don't understand what you wish to accomplish.
Dick I just want to see him before it is too late.
Richard You come then in the very last minute.
Dick How?
Richard What do you mean?
Dick Is he dying?
Richard No, but he will die.
Dick Why?
Richard Don't question me.
Dick I question nothing. I just wonder.
Richard You wonder too much. Don't you see that his days are numbered? He was unaccountable from the beginning, and nothing can change his destiny for the better, only for the worse, which it has been doing all his life.
Dick I would still wish to give him a chance, if you don't mind.
Richard Get in then, before I change my mind. (*lets him in to the cell to an old melancholy prisoner who once was king*)
Dick How are you, your majesty?
Henry I am no majesty any more and have actually never been. Have you come to pity me or to rebuke me?
Dick Neither, but since I had an opportunity I didn't want to miss the chance of seeing you.
Henry And why do you think the duke granted your wish?
Dick I actually wondered that as well.
Henry Because he knows that you in that case will probably be the last person to see me alive.
Dick Why so?
Henry They are going to murder me.
Dick Why do you think so?
Henry I know it.
Dick How do you know?
Henry I have always known it. I always knew that I would end like this.
Dick Do you mean that you have been a fatalist all your life?
Henry I was born a king of England and France without knowing anything about myself. Only gradually as a child it appeared to me that I had been born to the highest position in the world without having done anything to deserve it, and then I felt at once, that I would have to pay for it, just because I didn't deserve it.

It all went well as long as I was a child and grew up, the whole world spoilt me, I was the golden boy of the times, and nothing could shake my position. And then I was solemnly crowned and married to the best queen anyone could get, but in contrast to me she was ambitious for power and could not tolerate any competition. All the power I was born to and reserved for me alone, and which I never really had any interest in, she took

over to administer in my place, and she was at least competent, but she should never have disposed of my uncle Humphrey. Look now what duke of Gloucester they got instead of him.

Why do you think the duke of Gloucester let you in to me? Can you guess?

Dick Why if not by grace?

Henry Are you so naïve? It was of course to satisfy his sadistic cruelty and to give you the pleasure of seeing me alive during the last moments of my life before he kills me. We are all in the whole country victims to his cruelty, and he enjoys it. That's why we are.

Dick Still you don't complain of the injustice done to you but seem on the contrary rather indifferent to your fate.

Henry Only he who creates his destiny himself can master it. I did nothing to become a king, while I allowed all the others who wanted to rule in my place, since I never was really interested at all. So when things went bad for everyone in the country, it was at least not my fault, but only the others had to take the responsibility, and it was exclusively with the house of York. I think they will have to pay for it as much as I, although I was without guilt.

Dick Why then didn't you wish to govern?

Henry Because all politics and power is something mortally unsound. Behold the misery it has caused to both our lands! Hundred years of war! The virgin of Orleans and her persecution! All the thousands of families that were bereft of fathers, brothers and sons! Only destruction and death for a hundred years for England and France! Do you think I was mad enough to be willing to take responsibility for that, when I saw that it was all only about war and violence and egoism and hubris in the absurd name of vanity? No, I dare praise myself for being too wise for that, which perhaps will be my life's only permanent renown, no matter how little it is worth.

Dick That confirms my suspicions. Although you were a weak and vacillating king who never really wanted to undertake anything, you were wiser than anyone else in all France and England.

Henry Thanks for that. It almost sounds like an acknowledgement.

Dick In the name of truth I must acknowledge your humanity in an inhuman world of, as you say, only war and destruction.

Henry That's what I mean. So you will bear witness of me to the future, that I at least never took part in anything evil?

Dick You can count on that.

Richard (enters and interferes) That's enough, gentlemen! The audience is finished! Dick, go home and stay away in the future!

Dick (to Henry) My king, I will not be the only one to preserve your memory.

Henry Thanks, my friend.

Dick (to Richard, as they go out) What have you got to fear out of him? He is perfectly harmless.

Richard That doesn't matter. He still has his title. As long as it stays alive with him he is the greatest threat against the house of York.

Dick If you fear him so much, how do you think you could get rid of him even if you kill him?

Richard Are you as mad as he?

(Dick leaves without another word)

Has everything we have done to crush the house of Lancaster only turned him into a Lancastrian? Well, he will probably see what's best for him and stay at home in the future. But the king must die tomorrow. I had better murder him myself. Then he has no one else left in the family than his own widow, a ghost of a mother. – I had better murder him at once, before someone else comes here wishing to see him. He is all finished anyway, and his son must be longing for him. *(draws his sword and enters the cell.)*

Scene 2. A beautiful glade in the forest. Dick enters on a morning walk.

Dick How beautiful life suddenly is! Lord Foxham has given me Joanna for a bride, only the wedding is yet to be, and I don't have to take any more part in the political disturbances of the country. Richard of Gloucester has given me leave, he finds me unworkable for his hard regiment, I am too soft, he says, a woman's man and hopelessly a political virgin, so I might as well stay that way. But who moves in the bushes? Halt!

Sir Daniel (again disguised as a leper) It's only me, Dick.

Dick I recognize you. Are you then running away again?

Sir Daniel I am on my way to Holywood, my last possibility of a temporary asylum in this country.

Dick That road is closed to you.

Sir Daniel So even you exclude me from the human community? The house of York wants to see me executed, and the house of Lancaster regards me with abhorrence for having deserted them at Shoreby and allowing lord Risingham to perish without reinforcement. I have nowhere to go. Take my life then, Dick, and put an end to me once and for all.

Dick You may go anywhere but not to Holywood.

Sir Daniel I know. You made certain about your future wife there. You match well together in spite of all. I actually intended her for you from the beginning, but then you started asking questions, and I had to find another solution. It could have ended better than like this, Dick.

Dick Yes, if you had stuck consistently to the house of Lancaster and not turned against me. How did my father really die? Why were you always reluctant to answer that question?

Sir Daniel It was an accident. What happened was never intended. He became troublesome. Just like you he asked too many questions. In war you may not question the facts. It was in the beginning of the civil war. Sir Humphrey of Gloucester was powerful then but was overthrown by king Henry's headstrong queen, the daughter of the king of Provence, an equally determined woman as that

teenage witch who liberated France. Your father took sides with Sir Humphrey of Gloucester. It was not acceptable. He had to go.

Dick Who did it?

Sir Daniel No one wanted to do it. All were innocent. A hired assassin disappeared at once. Today everyone has forgotten him.

Dick Sir Oliver Oates?

Sir Daniel Yes, he sent your father to his death, the ambush that finished him, but he was unaware of it. He only obeyed orders.

Dick By you?

Sir Daniel By what was the compelling circumstances.

Dick So in a civil war no one is responsible neither for the consequences nor for it at all could begin?

Sir Daniel Yes, Dick, that is about how civil wars work, like an illness that consumes itself, until everyone has killed everyone.

Dick Go in peace, Sir Daniel. I want no harm to any man any more, for I have a new life to live together with my becoming wife.

Sir Daniel I know. I leave you in peace. Live happily if you can under the new regime, but your lord Richard of Gloucester does not exactly bode any good.

Dick I have nothing to do with him.

Sir Daniel But he has made you a knight.

Dick An empty title, just like yours.

Sir Daniel Maybe you learned something about the mundane vanity from this. I, who drove so many into exile and lawlessness, must now myself as an outlaw try to get out of the country. In the end all matters get sorted out evenly. Good-bye, Dick. I am sorry that I let you down. *(moves on pathetically)*

Dick There is something deplorable about him. Such a great and mighty man, and now a creeping rat in disguise. It's pathetic.

(Suddenly there is the sound of a bowstring, and Sir Daniel, who is just about to disappear out of sight, is hit in the back and falls. Dick immediately rushes forth, takes care of Sir Daniel and tries to see what he can do about it.)

Sir Daniel (dying) Is – the arrow – black?

Dick Yes, Sir Daniel. It is black.

(Sir Daniel rattles and dies in cramps.)

Ellis (gets out of the bushes) That was the last black arrow, Dick. The brotherhood is dissolved, since it's not needed any more. The war of the roses is consuming itself by its last tragedies. I don't want to take part any more. You did right to let him go and give him absolution. I did wrong, I realize that now, who got fanatically fixed on relentless revenge, but it is over now.

Dick Sir Oliver Oates?

Ellis He lives and may live. Bennet Hatch fell in the battle of Shoreby. I have nothing left to do but to atone for the terrible crimes of fruitless retaliation. There is only emptiness left in my heart now when it is all over. But for you life will begin. I envy you.

Dick I felt the same emptiness after the battle of Shoreby and then swore to never again have anything to do with war, violence or politics of any kind.

Ellis Then we are colleagues. Take my hand, Dick. We found each other in lawlessness. Let's now continue together in embracing peace.

(They join hands and walk out like brothers.)

The End.

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translated 24-29.11.2019.*

Comment

The problem with almost all screen versions of Robert Louis Stevenson is how Robert Louis Stevenson has been done away with. There are any number of film versions of "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" while none of them have done justice to Stevenson, not even the Jean Renoir film with Jean-Louis Barrault, which made quite an effort in focussing on this problem.

There are at least two film versions of "The Black Arrow", one in black and white with James Macready as an impressive Sir Daniel, and the other from 1985 in a Walt Disney production with Oliver Reed in a more realistic feature. The Hollywood film is as expected very stylized and elegant with only good-looking actors and lovely ladies in enchantingly beautiful costumes, while the 1985 version is completely without varnish and strikingly melodramatic. There is consistent great action in the version of the 40s, while the Walt Disney version is slower while at the same time more faithful to the 15th century. Both differ completely from Stevenson's novel.

In the 40s version Ellis Duckworth is replaced by John Sedley, Joanna's father, who does not appear in the novel since she is an orphan. In the film you can see how Sir Daniel himself murders Harry Shelton and blames John Sedley for it, who is brought to court and is to be executed, while brother Lawless saves him for a life in lawlessness. Instead of the war and the battle of Shoreby, Sir Daniel and Dick finally settle their differences in a private tournament organized by Richard of Gloucester, who here appears as a noble and dashing duke in perfect style with the glamour of the film – there is no humpback here. The whole action takes place after the fall of Lancaster and commences with Dick coming home after three years in the war and finds his father murdered and the house of Sedley burnt down as a vengeance for

John Sedley's alleged murder. Almost the entire action then takes place at the castle in Tunstall. Brother Lawless plays here an important comical part with the specialty of making soldiers on the way drink themselves under the table.

The alteration of the story goes even further in the Walt Disney version, which in parts builds on the earlier version. Here the complex intrigue of Stevenson is extremely compressed and simplified, also here the action is limited to one and the same castle, and here Sir Daniel himself intends to marry Joanna. She escapes in the face of this unwelcome prospect, and Dick is sent out to chase her. She hates him from the beginning, but the development of their relationship is handsomely and convincingly related. She is loyal to Lancaster and hates York, while Sir Daniel and Dick are entirely for York. Like in the version of the 40s, also this film is crowded with brawls and swordfights which here are more prolonged and meticulous – on two occasions a warrior falls down a precipice splashing into a river. This is though an unusually good Disney film for not being animated, and it has been positively acclaimed. Especially Dick, who is a debatable and not very sympathetic character, is well rendered here (by Benedict Taylor). Instead of Richard of Gloucester they have put the earl of Warwick as a kind of godfather to the whole spectacle (a glorious Fernando Ray), with whom Sir Oliver Oates (Donald Pleasance) is intriguing. He asks everyone to trust him which no one does, why he finally is shot by Sir Daniel himself. Even here Ellis Duckworth is replaced by John Sedley, who does not use the name of John Amend-All but *The Black Arrow*, well played by Stephan Chase. No matter how much the film differs from Stevenson, it has found the right Stevenson adventure spirit, which is missing in the 40s version. The wedding scene as a finale has here been set in a proper cathedral, which also has been made the scene for the end game and a brilliant conclusion.

In this dramatization we have above all tried to stay true to Stevenson and followed him as far as possible – it's almost only the shipping episode that has been left out here, like in the films, wherefore the poor captain Arblaster is not one of the players. Stevenson was himself dissatisfied with the novel, which he called a patchwork, which he really only wanted to make himself rid of, and there certainly are some question marks and carelessness – for instance, you never learn how Dick's father actually died. King Henry VI is not in the book except as mentioned casually in conversations, while we found it impossible to leave him out as the springing point of the entire traumatic civil war. Richard of Gloucester is as brilliantly and revoltingly depicted with shockingly convincing realism by Stevenson, why we also not have been able to leave him aside, although he is the most repulsive ingredient of the novel as responsible for the bloody battle of Shoreby, which in reality was the decisive battle of St. Albans.

Editing completed 6.12, which happens to be king Henry VI:s birthday.