

# *One Man's Right*



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or

*The Strange Case of Charles Stuart.*

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with suggested corrections by Leslie Pendrill)

## *Dramatis Personae:*

Charles I Stuart, King of England, Scotland and Ireland  
Henrietta, his wife and Queen  
Maria of Medici, the Queen's mother, formerly Queen of France  
William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury  
George Con, Catholic Cardinal  
Count Rossetti, a papal legate  
Black Rod, special servant of the Crown  
Duke of Buckingham, the King's favourite  
Sir Thomas Wentworth, later Earl of Strafford  
Lord Keeper Finch, Speaker of the Parliament  
Sir John Eliot  
Sir Edward Coke  
Clement Coke, his son  
Doctor Turner  
Lord Bristol  
Sir Nathaniel Rich  
John Selden  
John Pym  
Christopher Wandesworth  
Denzil Holles  
John Rolle  
Oliver Cromwell  
Sir Miles Hobart  
William Prynne, puritan lawyer  
Harbottle Grimston  
John Glanville  
Viscount Lucius Carey Falkland  
Clotworthy  
Earl Robert Devereux of Essex, commander-in-chief of the puritans  
Bulstrode Whitelocke

John Cook  
Sergeant John Bradshaw  
Colonel John Hewson, one of the King's judges  
John Downes  
Francis Litton, Esquire, countryman from Bedford  
a messenger  
a guard of Parliament  
the Attourney General  
a herald  
a soldier  
a prosecutor  
a judge  
clerks of court  
two women  
three bishops  
four Scotsmen  
members of Parliament  
puritans  
a court audience

The action concerns the reign of King Charles the First 1625-1649.

### *One Man's Right*

Act I scene 1. Parliament, House of Commons, May 1625.

*Charles* I have opened this Parliament from the pure necessity of having some help and advice from the nation of which I am ruler and king. You all know what probations we have to expect as a consequence of those we already suffered in frightening pain, and for that very reason, that our most difficult future will be even harder than yesterday, it is essential that we bravely brace ourselves to meet the challenge of war and its heavy demands with unflinching decision. And at the same time I must warn you, that insolent sloth on your part will not be well received. I will take it as common contumely and as refusal of co-operation. (*sits down*)

*Speaker* Sir John Eliot.

*Eliot* As His Majesty has the most graceful politeness and kindness to speak to us openly thus without cringing and circumlocutory ambages we shall provide a straight answer in similar manner. Being fully responsible for Devon's fleet as vice-admiral my heart has bled like no other man's at the deplorable sight of that fleet on its tragic return from Cadiz. I refuse not to co-operate with my king. There is no one in this House Of Parliament who is inclined to oppose him. I only wish to be

informed of His Majesty's plans for the future before we produce new resources for what might become even more catastrophic adventures than what all too many of us have already been sacrificed for.

*(approval from members of Parliament)*

*Eliot (can't hold back)* For let it well be known universally, that our honour is sullied, our fleet has been sunk, we have lost our sons and all this not through battle and war but through one single man's hand who was the most trusted man in our nation.

*(upset members mumbling. Eliot is seated.)*

*Clement Coke* My most honoured father unfortunately being absent, I must in his place fill the silence which he never would have kept in such a matter. On Sir Edward Coke's behalf I must at least point that out that we all would prefer to die on the sea fighting enemies rather than suffer dishonour and humiliation at home and in front of our countrymen! *(is seated. The perturbation continues.)*

*Doctor Turner* Someone must finally open his mouth. Without cowardly politeness and care and without any compliments I wish to ask openly Mister Speaker, Your Majesty and all this Parliament: Did never our Lord Admiral, the Duke of Buckingham, clear all the oceans from pirates? And didn't he just before that by promoting incompetent officers make himself guilty of the greatest disaster of our Cadiz expedition? And has not that man in addition provided himself and his family and even some of his friends with considerable sums of money and land property which belonged to the crown? Has he not even sold legal offices and bribed officials with titles of honour? Is he not in such an appalling licentious incompetence a perfect danger to this our nation? Is not even this situation summed up in the fact that he only, this great and omnipotent Duke, this infallible man, is quite guilty of all the disasters and failures of this our country? *(is seated. Great disturbances.)*

*Speaker* Members of Parliament, order! We must keep our order and not get upset! Doctor Turner, your strange accusations have greatly affected this House which was never prepared for such direct and brutal indictments against a most trusted and personal friend of the King. On behalf of most members I must now immediately make it quite clear that we do not wish anything else here in Parliament than to have the impeccably stable position of His Royal Majesty honoured, insured and safe-guarded in our land and fully respected abroad.

*Charles* My good Parliament, this is not the very first time I have called you here to some matters of national interest to which your response has been wild accusations against my most personal friends. I must call doctor Turner to court at Whitehall. You surprise me by your strange behaviour. Instead of protecting and caring for national welfare and urgent security you fall in base pits of envy where you turn to monsters of meanness and pettiness. I can not tolerate that my most trusted man here is insanely accused. To accuse him is vilely to sharpen a knife against the royal sovereign's back. It was your king my father who raised him to be our prime minister and to his dukedom, and that, I have learned, was much less than our worthy duke earned. I do trust him as confidently as if he was my elderly

brother. That perfect relationship must not be basely disturbed by the sickly destructiveness of human folly and envy.

*Eliot* Your Majesty, we do not argue from womanly feelings of sentiment, but we are here to deal straightly with facts. How are we to bring forth more resources and money when everything we have succeeded in gathering earlier has perished, been sunk and been burnt by the great Duke of Buckingham? It is a fact and a naked fact recognized almost by everyone that the said duke has completely failed almost in everything. He has succeeded alone in dispersing the treasury of our state and not only the Treasury's money but even the King's. We must from common sense be restrictive in building new ships and in finding new troops until all this flamboyant disuse and dispersal of national revenues has been corrected.

*Charles* This Parliament was not called upon to bring in question the higher intelligence and understanding of the royal crown and its dire necessities. Has not Clement Coke just made it clear to us that it is better to die abroad fighting enemies rather than suffer dishonour and humiliation at home? I must in the same manner explain to you that it is to be preferred that a king dies fighting in battle on alien ground against bloody barbarity than experiences the humiliation of being condemned and ignored by his people in his own Parliament. It is not Buckingham who demands money. It is our war. But you care nought except for yourselves, and you stare yourselves blind and demented by envy at the magnanimity of the good duke. I will end by reminding you of, that the Parliament does not exist except at the king's pleasure and will. He alone has the power to summon it, he gives it rights of discussion and debate, and he has the right whenever he likes to break it up. If I can not find the disposition of Parliament positive it is my duty as a most responsible monarch to close it.

*Eliot* We must all the same call the duke to account for his actions; we have the authority to carry through the procedure, and it shall be done in both Houses.

*Charles* What do you accuse him of then, my right hand and my one trusted friend?

*Eliot* High treason. Nothing less.

*Charles* Sir John Eliot, you and all your commons are making a serious mistake.

*Eliot* On the contrary. We exist only in order that grave mistakes might be avoided, corrected and cured.

*Charles* If you dare to persist in your shameful procedure I must end this Parliament only to have the duke saved.

*Eliot* Even if you dissolve our Parliament your duke can never be saved.

*Charles* As a king and as a human being it is my most sacred of duties to do all I can for a friend.

*Eliot* In that case, Royal Majesty, even the whole Parliament will not be of any avail to you, for we deal first of all only with politics. Parliament can not pay any attention to personal human relations.

*Charles* The good duke shall meet his opponents in the House of Lords.

*Eliot* I don't doubt it, and there he shall suffer.

*Charles* He never shall suffer as long as I still can protect him.

*Eliot* Your majesty, this crooked course which you've chosen is dangerous.  
*Charles* I did not choose it. You chose it, and I am just taking the consequences and protecting myself.  
*Eliot* All you risk is to have all your people against you.  
*Charles* I can well afford to take such a small risk. I am a king, am I not?

## Scene 2. Whitehall.

*Henrietta* What did the Parliament say?  
*Charles* My consort, my soul is deeply troubled unto death.  
*Henrietta* It's not the first time.  
*Charles* Yes, I know. It will not be the last time either, probably.  
*Henrietta* I've heard that people want to execute the Duke of Buckingham.  
*Charles* Yes, so they say, and can you understand it? I can not. He is my elder brother to me. So magnificent and handsome, admirable, strong and wilful in his most authoritative charming personality, so good and kind – I loved my brother far more than I did my father. He was the born king, the perfect Prince of Wales. That he would pass away so early and unjustly of a broken heart is only one of many evil omens on my way. My father always feared to be assassinated, and the same foreboding not to say conviction always was my own. We do not know if he was really poisoned or if his most solemn death was natural.  
*Henrietta* He was an old man who no longer was of any good.  
*Charles* But never did an English monarch have more enemies than he although he was so silly.  
*Henrietta* Your tremendous fear of shadows is a mere and foolish superstition.  
*Charles* Which is founded well on facts. When I was still a baby lying in my cradle sickly and deformed, one night a stranger was seen stealing up to me and casting over me a frightening black veil. No one knew anything about the fellow, and he disappeared as suddenly and without trace as he had come. And it was said then, that a devil had spread over me his evil veil of darkness...  
*Henrietta* But such fairy tales out from the nursery are being told of almost every other well-born human being.  
*Charles* But that is not all. The most profound experience in all my childhood was when grandmother was smuggled out of Peterborough to be buried in the vaults of Westminster.  
*Henrietta* Who was your grandmother?  
*Charles* I speak of Mary Stuart. When she was entombed in Westminster all public ceremony was forbidden. In the midnight hours the black coffin secretly was smuggled down into the chapel to be consecrated to eternal rest in silence in the lights of torches spreading a strange atmosphere of terrible intensity. I can remember it as if it had been yesterday. Of all the royalties I've met, she made the most profound impression on me although she was only an entombed and rotting corpse.

*Henrietta* But you have no right to accuse yourself of your own elder brother's death.

*Charles* Have I no right? When he was dying shortly after our sister's marriage, lying deadly sick from something totally unknown, Sir Walter Raleigh, then imprisoned in the Tower, sent to him a medicine which I administered to him, which maybe was his death. It was in autumn in the darkness of November, the most hopeless dreary month of all the year, which I myself was born in. He was only eighteen years of age, a fully grown and perfect man without a shadow of the aging resignation of maturity, the only rightful heir to our kingdom which I never was. He would have been a perfect monarch, while I was his mere inferior, just as I have always been inferior to the Duke of Buckingham.

*Henrietta* You must not let yourself be dominated. You alone are king, and that is an unalterable fact. How did the Duke of Buckingham come to have so much power over you?

*Charles* He got it only since I was inspired with so great a confidence in him when we together suffered hard in Spain.

*Henrietta* Whatever happened there?

*Charles* It was before we knew each other, you and I, as I proposed to the Infanta, the most beautiful Maria, and I travelled there with Buckingham to have the marriage carried through. All seemed to turn out well, until the Spanish church began to complicate the matter by demanding ever more absurd concessions from the part of our Church of England to the benefit of Rome. It ended in a mess and jungle of most terrible intrigues of the bureaucracy, I was completely caught in a cocoon of Spanish webs constructed to entangle me by the most poisonous of hellish spiders, so that I had nothing further in the end to do than to abandon the whole thing. The only one who helped me in those dreadful difficulties was the Duke of Buckingham. Without a bride I came back home to England, and it felt as if I also came without my honour having a betrayed betrothal to atone for. Ever since that day I have experienced life as something of a trap which constantly is closing in on me more hopelessly for every day. It is as if I always have to free myself from ugly burdens which grow heavier, as if something nauseating undefinable is ever loading and increasing on my body in a constantly augmenting parasitical expansion which I ever must exert myself to fight in ever greater strain with only the result that in the end I must succumb to this tremendous evil anyway, forever being under a most crushing growing mountain of disastrous bursting tumours which implacably grow out from my own living corpse...

*Henrietta* You speak now of your ordinary nightmares.

*Charles* Yes, I know. But they are probably the nightmares nowadays of every king.

*Henrietta* But least of all they should be yours, for you are the most kingly and the purest monarch of all Europe.

*Charles* Do you think so?

*Henrietta* I don't merely think so. I am certain of it.

*Charles* Then that's maybe why I'll also have to suffer most.

*Henrietta* What makes you think so?

*Charles* I don't know. Your intuition tells you without reason. Maybe it's because there is someone who loves me? *(He smiles. They kiss.)*

### Scene 3. The House of Lords.

*Charles* My lords, I hereby prosecute lord Bristol for high treason against us, the crown and state and Church of England. Under false pretensions he prevailed upon his king to travel to the musty Spain expecting me to change religion, and he strained himself in giant efforts to enforce the making of a royal match which never could have been of any benefit to England. The repulsive horrors which I faced in Spain have given me an ineffaceable insufferable bitter taste which I as sovereign of this our country must do everything to rehabilitate myself from. I must therefore summon this lord Bristol, guilty of the tragedy, to court. *(is seated)*

*Lord Bristol* My worthy peers and equals and your Majesty, I am a freeborn and untarnished gentleman of some nobility, and what I have to say does not concern myself or my defense as much as it concerns the national security and safety of our king. I therefore ask your leave to use my words unvarnished. The atrocious accusations directed against me are most opportune but totally misguided. I must therefore be allowed to change their course against the very man who is alone responsible for every failure in Spain. *(points with his finger)* My lords, I must accuse that man for unmistakable high treason!

*Buckingham (untouched)* My lord Bristol, you are but a common fool.

*Charles* I must protest. Lord Bristol, you can not bear witness for yourself if you accuse another of your own high treason.

*Bristol* I will prove that I have every right in all the world. You all know how the Duke of Buckingham not only holds too many offices in order to misuse them all, how he is even purchasing more offices in order to secure absurd and shameful and illegal privileges for his family, how he has failed deliberately as an admiral and let loose every single pirate on the seas, how he has given our ships away to the catholic league of France, how he has tried himself with most considerable effort to convert his majesty to popedom, and how he most personally did assist at the last bedside of king James, pretending to give medical attendance to the dying monarch while he actually but hastened the departure of the King.

*Charles (aside)* An accusation of such overwhelming nastiness hits me and is directed at the heart of monarchy.

*Buckingham (rising)* My lords, against all ordinary practice and convention, I will rise and answer for myself against these far-fetched and exaggerated senseless accusations. Only one of them is serious, and it is the one concerning my affairs in Spain. I must confess that I did suffer from bad luck, but that is all I can be guilty of. Our plans did not work out quite well, but that was no one's fault. We did as well as anybody could, and no one did commit mistakes that could have been avoided. I was

innocent, the King was innocent, and everyone of us was innocent. We sometimes meet with troublesome adversities, there's no one who is able to avoid them, and they never are deserved. And just because I hold a powerful position, none of you has any right to burden me with the deplorable results of the adversities that no one did invite. I overlook the accusations of my nation against me because it is well known that those who act against me do it only from blind jealousy. They disregard the common weal and sacrifice it in their efforts to locate a scapegoat for the burden of our national misfortunes. That is not the way to happiness, my lords. (*is seated*)

*Lord Bristol (rising)* Nevertheless, my noble Duke of Buckingham, you have a process now to meet with carried against you by both the Houses of our Parliament. The law of our land proclaims that illegalities or evil conspirations never can be caused or even thought of by our sovereign. Whatever has occurred, we can't accept that no one is responsible. It's only reasonable then to put the man to full responsibility through which the national misfortunes have occurred. That's all there is to it. My Duke of Buckingham, you must stand up to your defense now in the House of Commons. (*the session is concluded.*)

#### Scene 4. Whitehall.

*Henrietta* That duke of Buckingham seems only to be causing you and everybody else tremendous lots of problems. Can't you finish his career?

*Charles* My dear, I can't do such a thing. He is my only friend. He is the only man remaining from the grand old age of yesterday. He is a true cavalier and gentleman. He is the only man whom I can trust and look up to for an example. Walter Raleigh was decapitated infamously by my father only for the reason that he did not have enough good luck, and Francis Bacon the philosopher was liquidated morally for nothing and for life. Of the Elizabethans there is only our good friend the Duke of Buckingham still living. I refuse to cut the last of my remaining links with yesterday, an age which was most incomparably more happy than our own.

*Henrietta* But he is dangerous with his immensity of power, and his only skill is in the failing business, and that is the only business in which he is occupied, and that he is most thoroughly.

*Charles* But he remains my friend. He is my only friend. A gentleman does not desert a friend, especially not if he is in trouble.

*Henrietta* But you are the King of the United Kingdom first of all! You must pay more regard to your own happiness and to political demands!

*Charles* We have been quarrelling about all this before. I must refuse to compromise with what my conscience tells me is the right thing.

*Henrietta* What is right for you is not always right for the people and the nation.

*Charles* For such an argument I have dissolved the parliament. My dear, you are beginning now to sound exactly like a most unbridled House of Commons.

*Henrietta* But I'm in the right, and you have to listen now and then to others.

*Charles* I am also in the right, and I am King, and my right is the surest way in this country. If I know then what is right I will not have to listen to unnecessary oppositions.

*Henrietta* You are so dependent on that Buckingham that one could think that you prefer that man to me.

*Charles* The sense, the honesty, the uprightness, the logic and the strength of man is much to be preferred to woman's pulling man down to her own weak level.

*Henrietta* Is then woman not a human being?

*Charles* She is human but not man and will not ever be a good replacement for a man.

*Henrietta* The virgin Queen Elizabeth though was much healthier to England than a king in thousand years of history has ever been.

*Charles* That's quite another thing. She was a virgin all her life.

*Henrietta* And was she not a woman?

*Charles* Yes, she was a woman, but she was not womanly. She never gave herself to nature's urge like every ordinary woman does.

*Henrietta* I beg you anyway to do without that Buckingham. Unless you do he will but harm you and the nation even more than he has done so far.

*Charles* I can not do without my only friend and equal when he is in need.

*Henrietta* But he is only bringing you bad luck!

*Charles* It seems that I was born to fight misfortunes of bad luck and to resist them. They can never harm me even if they make of me their victim.

*Henrietta* You're a man of flesh and blood like everybody else!

*Charles* But with the difference that I also am a King. The role assigned to me by destiny is a most unassailable and sacred part which never can be soiled.

*Henrietta* Then follow Buckingham into your ruin!

*Charles* He may be accused indeed but he is still entitled to defend his cause.

*Henrietta* It will not help him even if his majesty himself defended him.

*Charles* The more important then that I defend him.

*Henrietta* Why?

*Charles* If he is lost and if I follow him into a corresponding tragedy we will though still have left a human value to defend for all eternity, and that will even still remain if every maniac in self-destructiveness forsakes his own. Like Buckingham I can refrain from everything but not from the one thing that we have brought with us as gift and heritage from the divine eternity, and that is what our human value is.

*Henrietta* But Buckingham has wasted it on scandals.

*Charles* Even if he has, the more important then to save what can be saved of that eternal value.

*Henrietta* You are both preposterous and quite ridiculous.

*Charles (smiling)* My dear, can you not understand that we are Englishmen?

Scene 5. Parliament.

*Eliot* Is he now going to inaugurate our Parliament anew?

*Wentworth* It definitely looks like it. That fox the Duke of Buckingham is forcing him.

*Eliot* The force of Buckingham will soon enforce a national and dreadful tragedy of great dimensions which we all will be involved in and pulled down and swallowed up in if no one will stop him.

*Wentworth* There is no one who can stop that Buckingham, and the King is only adding fuel to his conceit, presumptuousness and self-indulgence.

*Eliot* For what reason?

*Wentworth* That's the mystery. But lo! Here is the King.

*Charles* Do not believe that I have summoned this new Parliament to give you possibilities of small talk about nonsense. Time is calling us to action, and we must adapt ourselves to circumstances. War will not politely wait for us. We are compelled to fully dedicate ourselves to urgent action and decision with as little talk as possible. Long words and speeches at this juncture are exactly as injurious as negative and wrong decisions. I believe we all are fully well aware of what a high degree of peril now has called us all together for the imminent salvation of our national prestige and strength by bringing up new armies and new ships for our defence against the crisis. If you do not realize the seriousness of our dilemma and you fail to do your duty as good Englishmen there will be other means. But don't interpret this as something of a threat, for I am not to threaten anyone less than myself.

*Wentworth* What does he mean?

*Eliot* He means that he is not regarding anyone as equal to himself. It is a fine way of explaining how much he despises everyone except himself.

*Wentworth* A king of every inch.

*Eliot* But he's a fellow who would gladly go too far.

*Sir Edward Coke* Your majesty, we are aware indeed of what is threatening us after the most honourable Duke of Buckingham's repetitive defeats and scandalous continuous failures. You dissolved our latest Parliament in order just to keep your Buckingham. Now you have proved that you in spite of all do need your Parliament if not for other purposes at least for bandaging the damages of England after the mad universal suicidal ravings of the Duke of Buckingham. However, Buckingham has nowadays become the topic of the kind of which they say that the less said about the man the better. On the other hand, the human natural and logical demands of Parliament have matured at this time since the dissolving of the former Parliament three years ago. We are now willing to give all what you are asking for, our noble liege, if only you give us the laws of reasonableness for our own welfare. I'm afraid, your majesty, that it won't do to carry through new orders of taxation without laws of parliament to legally confirm them. And it will not do that servants of the crown break laws to follow their directions; if they keep on doing so the order of society will be dissolved. It will not do that people are arrested without reason and that they are kept in prison without themselves getting to know why.

*Sir Nathaniel Rich* We therefore promptly crave reforms to ensure safety for the people. We have put in writing all we ask for in an accurate petition which his majesty is asked to read at once for prompt ratification or refusal. If your majesty will sign, his majesty will have at once all his desired funds.

*Charles* And what are you so promptly craving for in this petition?

*John Selden* Just four simple items. Item one: that no taxation may be carried through without consent of Parliament. And item two: that none may be arrested without evidence of reason. Item three: that sailors, soldiers and marines may never be compelled to serve in war without their masters giving their consent. And item four: that never laws of war may be applied to punish sailors or recruited soldiers for habitual or commonplace mistakes. These elementary and rather too self-evident small matters were in fact already ratified four centuries ago and settled by King John in Magna Charta.

*Charles* So you do again in other words demand my dissolution of your Parliament.

*John Pym* If you dissolve it you will never have resources for your war.

*Charles* I call this blackmail!

*Eliot* Have you any choice, your majesty?

*Charles* I sign the document but with one reservation: that the total sovereignty of the King must be respected and preserved intact with even such a new decree as this.

*Edward Coke* In Magna Charta there is not a word about the King's position or his sovereignty. That concern is none of ours since it does not have a thing to do with our welfare or the welfare of the nation.

*Charles* Your security and privilege will not be granted if you do not grant the King his royal privilege.

*Eliot (to Wentworth)* If only he agrees with the petition we will soon be able to commit the Duke of Buckingham.

*Wentworth (to Eliot)* As long as Buckingham is free the King will be impossible.

*Edward Coke* Your majesty, if you demand such an absurdity and unheard of prerogative we simply must demand the definite removal of the Duke of Buckingham from all political responsibilities. We can not give you a new fleet to let it capsize under the command of Buckingham.

*Charles* I will agree to your petition, but I will not give you Buckingham. I can't hand over such a noble man to the pure arbitrariness of common pleasure. He is my man and I have not confidence in anybody else.

*John Pym* Your majesty, if only you give in to our petition you will have your fleet. It is of greater consequence that we agree with our King than that we bother about Buckingham.

*Edward Coke* Your majesty, you have your fleet.

*Charles* I thank you, Sir. I hereby ratify and sign this document of your petition. *(is given a pen and has already signed when a dismal company appears. A messenger at their head ascends to the King, kneels to him and whispers in his ear. Charles is shocked and drops the pen.)*

*(The news is being spread in Parliament. Eager whisperings are spreading along the benches.)*

Charles Who was the killer?  
Messenger A puritan.  
Charles What is a puritan?  
Messenger A man who only reads the Bible and nothing else.  
Charles In other words a rather boring sort of churl.

*(The news is spread.)*

one member Who has been killed?  
Another The Duke of Buckingham!  
A third one He was struck down among his staff in Portsmouth in the presence of his family. An injured sailor, probably humiliated by the Duke, called for revenge and stabbed the Duke to death right in his heart. He died at once.  
A fourth one *(cannot control himself)* Hooray!  
A fifth one We have been liberated!  
A sixth one The abominable tyrant has received his salary!  
*(Joy is spreading without control. The King is looking around with flaming glances. He leaves the House in haste with his company. The signed document is left behind. When the King is gone the parliamentary joy breaks out in earnest.)*  
John Eliot At last we may begin to breathe! Right now begins the freedom and new era of our Parliament! The King has given in to the most reasonable prayers of his people, and the Duke of Buckingham is gone forever! Life may now begin at last! *(partakes with enthusiasm in the common joy. The whole of the House of Commons is transformed into a regular celebration of happiness.)*

## Act II scene 1.

Charles Thomas Wentworth, I can't say why, but in some way I am inspired with great confidence in you. You are a diligent trustworthy person who believes in our state and in the monarchy and who could probably work wonders for the welfare of the state.

Wentworth Your majesty, although I do believe the King's authority to be the basis of all necessary order of society and its established continuity, I have made the acquaintance of the Tower through your gracious kindness.

Charles If you cry out in the House of Commons and thereby call forth rebellion, murder and high treason, then unfortunately the state prison is the only medicine. And greater men than you, like Sir John Eliot, Lord Bristol and Sir Edward Coke did languish there much longer than yourself.

Wentworth Your grace is sweet and wonderful just as your thirsting for revenge is terrible.

Charles You know and understand me better than most people, but not quite as well yet as the irreplaceable and indispensable good peacock Buckingham.

Wentworth He may have been invaluable as a friend, but I regret that all his fellow peacocks haven't become fewer for his absence.

*Charles* You are then a round-head?

*Wentworth* I am not a cavalier, but I will not join party with the roundheads either. The rich splendid cavaliers unfortunately have a certain talent for by overbearing self-love and conceit provoking men of lower standards, and the much more coarse and simple roundheads have a dangerous and vulgar weakness for with pleasure going readily too far and cross all limits for humanity and decency and common sense. The hard and stolid puritans are most incredibly unique in their absurdity, but they are all convinced fanatics, and it could be dangerous to underrate their force which it is easy for more tolerant and human men to do. If I dissociate myself from the established ignorance and self-complacency of the fat lazy cavaliers I will dissociate myself from the undisciplined obsession of the roundheads even more.

*Charles* Because of that you are a minister who I believe that I could trust. You are a cold and calculating man of some intelligence, and that if something is most needful for a lasting politician in my government today.

*Wentworth* I thank you for your royal confidence.

*Charles* It's nothing to be grateful for. Perhaps it is the opposite. Do not believe that it will be an easy game for you to be my minister. I am not as unscrupulous and criminal as that French cardinal called Richelieu, but on the other side I am not weaker in my firm decision and determination. Europe is at war, we managed to get out of it alive through most insufferable humiliations, but the puritans are turning our country into a conspiracy, and my most urgent task is now to pacify the worried opposition – with your aid, I hope.

*Wentworth* I am with you and will be constant on my guard for order and stability against all chaos, efforts to destruction and immoderate fanaticism on larger scales.

*Charles* That's all I want, and I am deeply thankful to you for your most constructive disposition. Hereby you may call yourself a baronet, and you have several promotions to look forward to if only you are faithful to your promising stability.

*Wentworth* To care for all stability in this our ancient country is my highest aspiration.

*Charles (takes him round his shoulder and shakes his hand)* Then you are my man. I thank you, good Sir Thomas Wentworth.

## Scene 2. The House of Commons.

*Christopher Wandesworth* There is quarrel now in every customs office.

*Denzil Holles* Do you think that we could manage to support the merchants and remain as the King's faithful parliament?

*Wandesworth* We simply have to. The free corps of merchants must exist. Our land can not afford to have each merchant locked up in a prison just because the state is stealing all his goods.

*Holles* They say in international affairs that we the English now are harder and more difficult as business men than Turks.

*Wandesworth* Here comes the King.

*Charles (appearing)* I wish to publicly explain that I have not collected merchandise by royal privilege or by my personal inviolable right but only by severe necessity abiding the assent of Parliament to a regrettable involuntary action of supreme importance to the nation. We have not yet managed to secure our peace in spite of all our critical defeats, and until England has secured her final peace we cannot grant ourselves the freedom we desire of our trade.

*(mumbling assent in Parliament)*

*John Rolle* Your majesty, we are most grateful for this noble speech, but all the same our House of Commons must persist in eager protestation. It's a legal fact that Parliament as yet has not acknowledged these new customs, and as long as this assent is lacking the presumption of these customs is illegal, and each merchant who pays this illegal toll is legally a traitor to the state. But that is not the sum of our protest. We have been astounded by appointments of one bishop of the Ariminian heresy after the other to the most important holy offices. We hardly see one single Christian bishop left in all this country.

*Charles* Ariminus only claims the right of the free will in contrast to the dominant Saint Augustine and the most angry Martin Luther. That does not make him a heathen. As the leader of the Church of England I wish that the Church may compromise between the immature exaggerations of the protestants and the catholic serfdom. But it seems to me that certain puritans would rather choose catholic serfdom *and* the Lutheran presumption. I think Parliament should stick to secular concerns and leave the supernatural religious queries to professional theologians.

*Oliver Cromwell (rising)* I propose the contrary, that all the business of the King of Earth should give place to the business of the King of Heaven.

*(common applause and consent)*

*Charles* Are you so far gone already? Do you then desert the issue of the national support and commerce to prefer the kicking out of every Ariminian and catholic whose only crime is that they think in other ways than you? This smells to me of some intolerance and bigotry. I must necessitate immediately that our meeting is adjourned.

*Many voices* No, never! Never! Everything at once! We shall have everything at once!

*One voice* Kick every non-puritan out of the country!

*Charles (aside)* They are quite ungovernable. They have crossed the limit as if they were all intoxicated. Mister Speaker, leave your chair at once if any member wishes more to speak. *(leaves promptly)*

*Sir John Eliot* My friends, this question is of the supreme importance and must be debated carefully and settled to make our future clear. I here propose...

*Speaker (rising)* I have been commanded by the King to leave my chair immediately if this debate is carried on.

*Holles* Mister Speaker, you stay on!

*Speaker (Lord Keeper Finch)* I will not stay defying the King's order.

*Holles* Come, Christopher! This query must be settled now once and for all!

*(walks up with Wandesworth to the Speaker and keeps this man by force in his place.)*

*Speaker* Let me go! *(breaks through and tries to escape. Some come to his aid, others try to stop him.)*

*One voice* Stay, you coward!

*Another* He is right. We must obey the King.

*A third one* This session has long since gone quite astray.

*A fourth one* We must discuss the issue of religion now while we are all together!

*(The Speaker is forced to return to his place.)*

*Holles* God's blood! You shall not get away until we have completed our debate!

*The third one* No, I have had enough. *(breaks up)*

*Wandesworth* You will remain, Sir!

*The fifth one* Let no one go out until we have completed this most vital session!

*The first one* Guard, please lock the gate so that no member can get out until we have completed all the business of this term!

*Guard* But it's against all ordinary practice...

*Sir Miles Hobart (takes the key from the guard and locks the gate demonstratively)*

There! Now we can start discussing and debating!

*One voice* I demand to have the word!

*Another* No, I must speak now before anybody else!

*A third one* We must proceed to a division!

*A fourth one* Stop your screaming and your kicking, you demented fool and idiot! It will be your turn in due course also!

*A fifth one* Gentlemen, I pray you, let's not panic!

*A sixth one* Yes, exactly! Everybody at the same time!

*Holles* Order! Order! Soon the civil servants of the King will come and close the Parliament dissolving it again maybe forever. Are we all agreed on the main points: no further reformation of religion, no more customs of our merchandise in every harbour, and each fellow who demands or pays the royal customs is proclaimed an enemy to our country. Who is for the proposition?

*An overwhelming majority* We all answer yes!

*Holles* The proposition is acclaimed. *(a pounding at the gate)* Here are the civil servants of the King now to end our opposition. Let them in!

*Members* We are ready! Let us out! *(The gate is opened. The members depart under vivid discussion mixed with wrath and firm decision.)*

*Black Rod (entering with some difficulty)* By order of the King this parliament is now dissolved forever! Sir John Eliot! Denzil Holles!

*Eliot* What do you want from us, you lackey?

*Black Rod* Prepare yourselves for living in the Tower. You are only two out of nine prattlers whom the King intends to offer bed and breakfast in the Tower probably interminably.

*Holles* Thank you for informing us. *At the exit the members are met with guards. Eliot and Holles are arrested among seven others.)*

*Black Rod (finally the one remaining)* It finally remains for me to bid adieu to this peculiar circus. Much has here been spoken but in vain as in a sack, for the last word is always with the King. And there's a higher voice than his, which is the voice belonging to the ruler of eternity, and that supreme authority is silence. *(leaves and locks the gate most audibly from the outside. All lights disappear.)*

### Scene 3. The King's Court.

*Judge* Next case, please.

*Clerk* Francis Litton from Bedford.

*Judge* Bring in the poor devil and let's have him sentenced.

*(Francis Litton is brought in, a simple man from the country, rather confused.)*

Do you know what you have done, Mr. Francis Litton?

*Litton* I couldn't help it!

*Judge* Read the accusation.

*Prosecutor* Mr. Francis Litton, farmer from Bedford, is hereby accused of gross blasphemy according to witnesses, committed in Saint Paul's Cathedral as the accused let down his breeches in order to piss against a pillar.

*Judge* And what have you to say to your defence, you man without respect?

*Litton* But please, somebody, how could I know that I was in a cathedral? I came here from the country to marry. I have never been to London before, and I suffer from the stone. I didn't know anyone in London, and then I needed to let water. What was I to do? I just couldn't hold it. Then I saw that great ruin full of heaps of litter and dust and stones and discovered a most convenient pillar, so I pissed. How could I know that it was a church? To anyone seeing it for the first time it was merely a public house in a most ruinous state.

*Judge (thundering)* A public house in a most ruinous state indeed, you irremediable good-for-nothing in a most ruinous state! It was the greatest and the holiest cathedral of this country! And you knew it not to be a church, you most shameful eyeless scapegrace! You shall have your ears cut for lacking your eyes!

*Litton (crying, on his knees)* Have mercy with me, o your honour! I knew nothing! I am only a simple fellow from the country! Consider my illness! I am miserably unable to make water when needful, and at other most inconvenient times I just cannot hold but must needs ease myself! I came to this town to be married, and what happens? I piss myself straight into hell just because I suffer from the stone! Forgive me! Have mercy on a poor incompetent idiot! Don't cut my ears, please! If you cut my ears I will never be married! Boo-hoo! *(cries desperately)*

*Charles (intervening)* Your honour, please release this man. I will go bail for him, for such a case is not deserving serious treatment. This man is completely ignorant of his

unwilling crime. It's all my fault because I haven't had the opportunity to yet repair our glorious cathedral.

*Judge (giving the sentence)* Francis Litton, Esquire, is hereby sentenced for his actions but released on bail. I must exhort you, Francis Litton, don't do it again!

*Litton* I promise never to do such a thing again, and I call all the world to be a witness to my oath. From now on I will only piss outside.

*Judge* We are content with that. Release the poor bewildered man. (*Litton is taken out.*) Next case, please!

*Clerk* William Prynne, established lawyer.

*Judge* And his crime?

*Clerk* The great libellous pamphlet "Histriomastix".

*Judge* That bloody balderdash! I never read such a most boring blooming nonsense. Bring in the bedevilled bastard. (*Prynne is brought in.*)

*Prynne (to the civil servants, angrily and loud)* Dare not touch me, damned servants of the devil!

*Judge* Mr. William Prynne, I must bring your attention to that you are standing here before the court. Whatever you may say will properly be taken down in writing and could be of use as evidence against you.

*Prynne* I dare say that you dare say a lot of nonsense, you incompetent and damned nincompoop! You are as lousy and condemned as all the royal family!

*Judge* The man is lost. Let's hear the accusation, Mr. Prosecutor.

*Prosecutor* Mr. William Prynne has been accused of gross insults and insolent attacks against in brief our whole society through his lampoon "Histriomastix".

*Prynne* Our whole society indeed! The whole society is nothing but the King's society with all its aberrations with indecent theatres in every street with madmen dressed like women and with women shamefully dressed up as men, with mixing of the sexes and with public prostitution at the royal court, with drunkenness made legal all over the country and with scandalous performances of dancing at all public bars, and so on all the way to Satan's threshold. I assure you that king Nero was most rightly murdered just because he went to theatres! Each human being who is blasphemous enough to dare sit in an audience during theatre performances is nothing but a devil, and there is no actress who is not a harlot born to hell!

*Judge* So, Mr. William Prynne, are you aware that her most faultless royal majesty the Queen has acted well herself at court on stage in public?

*Prynne* She is just a woman. What she stoops to in the cursed name of all the court's indecency I should not give a damn about.

*Judge* You are a highly educated servant of the law, Sir. How can such a perfect man as you degrade yourself to such a beastly level of contemptible fanaticism?

*Prynne* And how can you as member of society endure the total impropriety of your society?

*Judge* You are quite lost, Sir. You are hereby found quite guilty of lese-majesty and sentenced to a fine of totally five thousand pounds. You will become excluded from all the judicial institutions of the kingdom and will publicly be pilloried. In public

you will be bereft of both your ears, and after that you will spend all your life in prison. Take that dumbbell out of here.

*Prynne (while he is taken out)* You cannot kill religion persecuting martyrs!

*Judge* Every fool is martyr for his madness. Let it be enough. Shut up the blasted mouth of that ridiculous and blatant screamer! (*Prynne is taken away.*)

*Charles (aside)* He was a so called puritan, and he was not alone. His boring and unbearable lampoon is like a modern gospel to that sect. If only man, instead of being a fanatical one-sided puritan, a pompous and presumptuous protestant, a superstitious and dogmatic catholic or a poor bleak and dismal calvinist, could be himself, a human being, and content himself with that all mankind be just good and honest Christians, our world would probably be rid of all unnecessary sufferings.

#### Scene 4. Whitehall.

The King, the Queen, their family and Cardinal George Con.

*Con* I am happy for your sake, and specially for your sake, my good Queen, that you are reunited with your mother for the first time now in thirteen years.

*Henrietta* Yes, once again the proverb has proved true: a mother's son is only hers until he takes a wife, whereas her daughter is her daughter all her life. It was the son, the King of France, who turned his mother out of France.

*Maria of Medici* No, it was Richelieu the Cardinal.

*Charles* It seems to be of small advantage then to be a catholic in even one of the most catholic of nations. If you are not wanted no religion will be on your side to help you against human and political disfavour.

*Con* Verily, the more important it is then to not get caught in secularity but to devote oneself instead persistently to heavenly affairs. Considering the matter, wouldn't it be most politically advantageous for your majesty with such a dominating catholic majority now in your family and with your highly international and continental disposition to allow yourself to be received into the only saving faith?

*Charles* My dearest cardinal, I am long since a most devoted catholic.

*Con* It warms my heart to hear it. But who did then secretly admit you in the only proper faith?

*Maria of Medici* You have to be a catholic according to the Roman catholic formalities and laws.

*Charles* Dear mother-in-law, women cannot fully grasp my meaning, but our friend the cardinal will understand. By catholic I mean what this adjective means. The word means universal and embracing all created things, I call myself a catholic because in my religion I embrace all Christian sects and variations. Therefore I cannot accept that any member of a Christian church is called schismatic or heretic by another member of another Christian church. We are all brothers in one single church, which is the holy and eternal one community of Christ which never can be cleft. And that is why dear cardinal, I also am a catholic.

*Con* Your majesty does then acknowledge the infallibility and absolute supremacy of the pope?

*Charles* No, never. Papacy was never authorized by Christ and hardly has a thing to do with Christendom. The pope is a deplorable but natural continuation of the Latin empire. That is why he claims his right to interfere with kings and emperors in their most secular affairs, which I as every Englishman dispute his right to do.

*Henrietta* My husband, though, goes regularly to confession and approves of celibacy.

*Charles* Yes, I do, and I think that the inquisition even can be useful if it is not used for torture and barbaric criminality. I find it hard, though, to accept that people in catholic countries rather pray and worship to that woman called Madonna than to God himself. I find that rather pagan.

*Henrietta* Charles has no objection to a church reunion.

*Charles* No, I welcome it. But you, my dearest cardinal, must make your pope relinquish his absurd idea that every prince who is not catholic must be deposed. If all the Christian churches ever will be reunited, all the different church authorities, and most especially the pope, must compromise with their self-righteousness.

*Con* I promise you, that our pope would gladly come across the sea and all the way to London to receive you personally in the only saving faith.

*Charles* But that's the very church which I already do belong to. Yours and mine, Calvin's and Luther's church can never be united and conciliated until his great holiness the pope admits that other people could be just as holy as himself.

*Con* But he is the successor of Saint Peter!

*Charles* If he only were and nothing else! Unfortunately he does also claim, just like Saint Paul, a personal monopoly on all Christianity. Who has a right to do so except Christ?

*Con* This theological dispute transcends my warrant.

*Charles* I am sorry about that, because I would myself most gladly theologically stop at nothing, if we only could avoid fanatics on the way.

## Scene 5.

*Wentworth* I come immediately. You never have to call upon me more than once. Is this new crisis dangerous?

*Charles* I know not yet. I only know that we no longer understand each other, me on one side and my people on the other. They have started a rebellion! Can you understand it, my Lord Wentworth? I can never understand it. After all, I am myself a Scotsman born in Scotland; why then should the Scots begin to turn against me? I expected everything and all the worst from the eccentric Englishmen, but that the Scots quite suddenly would drive me into this is quite beyond my comprehension. We have lived in peace and happiness for ten long years, and then the Scots make war against their King! My family is Scottish, we have governed all the Scots for many centuries, and now they ruin my career by most precipitously throwing all the

country into civil war. All that we have been living for and earned and saved for these ten years of welfare and prosperity, all which I tried to build by government, the Scots have now torn down and torn asunder and for nothing, as it seems, but for the sake of doing mischief.

*Wentworth* And how does the war proceed?

*Charles* It goes to hell! That's why I've called on you and made you Lord Lieutenant of all Ireland.

*Wentworth* And what do you wish me to do?

*Charles* Whatever you are able to.

*Wentworth* What was the reason for this Scottish insurrection?

*Charles* Like all devilry on this our island the main reason for their trouble seems to have been some small letter in the latest book of prayers.

*Wentworth* So because they did not like your book of prayers they preferred a bloody insurrection?

*Charles* Yes.

*Wentworth* But such an insolence must not be tolerated by a sovereign. Do you believe one moment that their insurrection really was about their piety? No, all they want is to break free to satisfy their lusts and crazy national ambitions.

*Charles* But the war is lost. The welfare of the state, constructed during ten long years of effort, is completely wasted.

*Wentworth* Then there is but one thing left for you to do.

*Charles* Which is?

*Wentworth* You have to call a parliament in order to collect the necessary funds for a continued war.

*Charles* That's what I wished for least of all. I haven't managed to forget the beastly awkwardness and terrible unpleasantness that Parliament produced the last time. We have lived in happiness without a House of Commons for ten years by now. Must I again confront the opposition of inferno after such a heavenly long blessedness?

*Wentworth* If you do not the Scots will definitely separate. The choice is yours.

*Charles* This mean rebellion of the Scots began by a community bombarding their own clergyman with benches as he read aloud from our prayer-book. A chair was thrown by somebody at him as he was standing in the pulpit. Everybody noticed that the culprit was a woman, but a chair of such a size could only have been thrown so high up by a strong and practised man. That row was planned and well prepared by men dressed up as frail and decent women. The rebellion was conceived and planned with an infernal viciousness, and only for that reason do I wish to subjugate my countrymen, my own good Scottish people. Let us call that parliament. If that infernal House of Commons will give me another hell, may that hell then be given over to the Scots.

*Wentworth* I think, your majesty, that there will hardly be another choice.

*Charles* Because you are so loyal and co-operative, my good lord, I will give you an earldom. What about a title like, for instance, Earl of Strafford?

*Wentworth* I will take it as another spur to be of service unto you, my King, and to the unity and welfare of the state.

*Charles* I thank you. (*Strafford kneels and kisses the royal hand.*)

Act III scene 1. The House of Commons, April 1640.

*Charles* Never was there a King who had more urgent reasons for calling a parliament than what I am having at present. I call your attention to what Mr. Speaker will say to you all. (*is seated behind*)

*Speaker (Finch)* Once again our land has been dragged into shadow of crisis by terrible turbulence way up in Scotland, wherefore our most gracious King has desired to speak with his people concerning this business. Much money is needed for war and subsistence. It is a tradition that his royal majesty summons a parliament each time a war situation calls for an emergency and economical measures. His grace is as usual illimitable, and if he will appear here in Parliament to leave behind all his glory and greatness you should at the same time observe that he never descends from his majesty. Parliament is now in session. (*is seated*)

(*All members sit quietly for a while staring at each other. No one seems to dare to open his mouth. After a while:*)

*Harbottle Grimston* I ask your kind leave, Mr. Speaker, to call the attention of everyone to one or two minor details. Our house has not been thus assembled for more than ten troublesome years. We have therefore eleven years' business to deal with. Do not think that one single member of us during these silent years has forgotten one detail of what was discussed during our last session. We must also meticulously deal with all the sad problems of first of all how the religion is managed and secondly all other reasons for public displeasure. We must consequently demand all the files and materials in the different cases of Eliot, Strode, Selden, Valentine, Holles and the other four who were arrested at our last session ten years ago. As we all know, Sir John Eliot died of his illness in prison. We also demand all the acts in the business of purchasing ships by the crown and a public exhaustive analysis of the suppression of Parliament in spite of its by a royal authority clearly acknowledged inviolable legal rights.

*Speaker (to the King)* They have not forgotten anything these many long years.

*Charles (to the Speaker)* They are even less reasonable than I feared and believed them to be.

*John Pym* What we fear most, your majesty and Mr. Speaker, is the royal licence which overrides the people to keep their own property.

*Charles* Here I must truly assure you all that it was never my wish to bring any harm to any man. My desire is to be a King only of a free people. If people lack freedom of property and its acquirement the King also will not be happy nor rich. I relinquish twelve ships and their income if only you grant me all that is needed to finish the war up in Scotland.

*John Glanville* We must first discuss most methodically all the business of the past eleven years.

*Charles* Do you not see that we can't afford waiting? I ask for your help, but you will only babble and squabble and talk and procrastinate all until doomsday. Delay in this question is damaging like a defeat.

*John Pym* If your majesty wishes to follow his wont and dissolve the parliament now just as it started working, there will be no subsidies.

*Charles* So you are threatening me! I will not bear your sly opposition which makes use of tardiness and provocations as weapons against me and government for one more hour!

*Srrafford* Your majesty, please have some patience! Just give them a chance! Try to show them respect and to tolerate them just for once! Maybe everything with a bit patience can be well cleared up and, as everyone wishes, well settled in peace.

*Charles* But all Scotland is raising its weapons against me, and I am a Scot! And this Parliament is only English and wants to get rid of me since I am only a Scotsman! I cannot bear this English morbid hypocrisy! Parliament is now dissolved! You refuse to co-operate with me, you crowd of political parasites! Then take the consequences! You are free to go home, you most damnable one-sided puritans! Go home and stay there and read there your Bibles until all this country is rotting from hypocrisy! I cannot stand any one of your seriously imbecile faces! God hang you all!

*(The Parliament is dissolved in agitated discussions.)*

*Strafford* My lord and king, I think you ought to have given them one fair chance.

*Charles* All they think of and work for is only to get power into their hands at the cost of myself and the crown. Have I then not the right to defend myself? But against such a community of vicious faithless and most unreliable Englishmen I have no other defense than to kick them all right in their arse. I knew perfectly well that this damned house of commons would only again give me troubles and drawbacks and even more worries. The adders who eleven years ago ruined my sense of security, peace and contentment have now fully grown into hateful and poisonous menacing murderous intrigant cobras!

*Strafford* In this way your people will never give you any kind of support to your war.

*Charles* So I'll fight all alone then and maybe end up a most lonely man fighting hard against everyone!

Scene 2. St. George's Fields, London. A Puritan meeting.

All puritans are dressed alike. No one can be differentiated from the other.

*Puritan 1* Can we any longer tolerate this tyranny? Are we to suffer anything? I must refuse! It's time to do something about it!

*Puritan 2* The King has busted his first parliament in eleven years, and that parliament proved the shortest of his reign! We hardly had time even to open our mouths! There are limits to our tolerance!

*Puritan 3* The guilty one is not the King. It's all his evil advisers who originate our troubles. We almost knocked down Buckingham, but he escaped humiliation through his lucky death. But we are suffering still from Strafford, Hamilton and the corruptor of the Holy Bible, that adulterator of religion, that most lousy bishop Laud!

*Puritan 4* You are quite right, my brother. We must needs get rid of them.

*Puritan 5* What news from Scotland?

*Puritan 6* They are all on our side, and they are well aware they have the knife against the throat of the oppressive government. They are quite sure that tyranny must fall and that the King must call his Parliament.

*Puritan 7* But we cannot stand still with our hands in our pockets and just wait! We have had enough long since! We must get organized for action! Time is now and not tomorrow!

*Puritan 8* Let's proclaim the villains Strafford, Hamilton and bishop Laud as enemies of our country! And let's never rest until they all are gone!

*Puritan 9* May they live as outlaws! Let anyone have any right to kill them any way!

*Puritan 10* Hurray! Let's liberate the King from all those wicked bastards who are parasiting on his power!

*Everyone* Hurray! (*The enthusiasm is uncontrollable, and everyone is ready to proceed to violence.*)

*Oliver Cromwell (aside)* Thus boils this cauldron with a constantly increasing violence and threatens already to overflow its brims. But that is nothing to what steadily is nearing. There's a process of some frenzied fermentation which will turn all England upside down when it explodes. And woe to every man who in the process chooses to resist the progress for the sake of his own worthless sense of honour. He will be completely swept aside by the approaching storm which will surpass all violent destruction in the previous history of England. That society created by the kings and served by soft poetic hearts like those of Chaucer and of Shakespeare will not ever more be recognizable again, for everything shall be uprooted like all withered weeds except the truth and sense and purity of our religion.

### Scene 3. Whitehall.

*Charles* What do you say now, Strafford? A demented London mob of puritans have broken into the town prison, put up shameful placards on my palace, called for human blood and not just yours but also Hamilton's and bishop Laud's with the voluptuous blood-thirst of a heathen Roman audience of gladiator games; and they have lynched the common fellow Thomas Benstead without reason, hanged the poor man just because he happened to be in their way and cut him up in four parts without even granting him the privilege of knowing why. The puritans are loose and

threatening the country with their rampant anarchy supported by the Scots. Now, Strafford, what are we to do?

*Strafford* There is but one thing we can do.

*Charles* Pray tell me what.

*Strafford* You have to call a parliament.

*Charles* And do you realize that that could be the end of both yourself and of my government?

*Strafford* Your majesty, you have no other choice if your rebellious puritans and Scots are to be pacified. If you could only bring your parliament to listen, all the wildest puritans and Scots will soon cease fire. You will only have to be prepared to make concessions.

*Charles* That's exactly what I fear. If you give such barbarians one piece of your tiniest finger-nail they will immediately voraciously chew up your entire arm most ruthlessly and without even pondering the unrefinedness of such gluttony.

*Strafford* I am afraid that you have no alternative if something of your government is to be saved.

*Charles* And I regret sincerely, my good Earl of Strafford, that I am by circumstances thus compelled to follow your advice, which probably will lead to that I will be forced to do without your service in the future, which has been most indispensable to me since you have been my only loyal servant.

*Strafford* That I will remain whatever happens.

*Charles* But why is there in Parliament just one man like yourself?

*Strafford* And who might that be?

*Charles* There is no one else but you.

#### Scene 4. The House of Commons.

*John Pym* I hereby publicly accuse Sir Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, of high treason. And we have no time to lose. The earl commands all military troops in Ireland and could bring them all over here to capture London. In addition we have been informed of that the Tower is surrounded by a military force that could be his. And if it is, it is the proof of Strafford's treacherous intention to besiege the city. We must therefore call the Earl of Strafford to be tried in court immediately in both our houses. (*acclamation*)

*Viscount Lucius Carey Falkland* I must needs remind you that you have no evidence against the Earl of Strafford for high treason. We must carefully examine all the matters of this case to start with and not hastily go too far risking a case of high treason without any proof.

*Clotworthy* Then I must in my turn remind you of the fact that there is written evidence against the Earl of Strafford proving his intention to bring all his Irish troops across the Irish sea for the attack on England.

*John Pym* We must act at once! If only that cruel earl is prosecuted and bereft of all his powers the worst scoundrel will be gone from our horizon. All the others will more easily then be disposed of.

*Falkland* Let's proceed to a division.

*Many members* That is hardly necessary.

*Clotworthy* Viscount Falkland, no one can afford in this most crucial moment to be weak. All members of this parliament except yourself are now just men of action. We will not give any king another possibility to have this parliament dissolved.

*Falkland* So I must then submit to your majority but cannot do it without definite misgivings.

*John Pym (to Falkland)* If the Earl of Strafford is condemned by law, the King can always use his privilege to pardon him.

*Falkland (to John Pym)* With such a parliament as this the King no longer has a power to be King.

#### Scene 5.

*Charles* My holy bishops, I have called you here to ask for your advice in a most desperate concern. I have been asked to cut myself from my right arm and sacrifice the Earl of Strafford to the policy of the licentious puritanic mob. What do you think about the matter?

*Bishop 1* What kind of advice is it you wish from us, your majesty?

*Charles* The puritanic House of Commons has condemned the Earl of Strafford for high treason without any evidence. Without a reasonable ground they wish to have him executed. And the House of Lords has tried him thrice and found him guilty with a vote of twenty-six prejudiced verdicts against nineteen for his innocence. My House of Lords has never previously been so depopulated. Only my name is now missing on the document of the judicial error.

*Bishop 2* It's the law or your prerogative. You have to choose between them.

*Bishop 3* Law is for the people. Your prerogative is now against the people or at least regarded as being against the people.

*Bishop 1* Your choice is between self-sacrifice and despotism.

*Bishop 3* If you sacrifice the Earl of Strafford you will in his place have gained your people and your parliament.

*Charles* But Strafford is completely innocent! He has done nothing but his duty! This judicial error will cry out for all eternity!

*Bishop 3* But haven't both our parliamentary houses found him guilty and condemned him by your laws?

*Charles* You ask me then to sacrifice the blood and life of a quite innocent and virtuous man who only did his duty?

*Bishop 1* We don't ask you to do anything. But politically you don't seem to have a choice.

*Bishop 2* If Strafford gets away by the King's noble grace, the entire people will become your enemy and turn against the King.

*Charles (aside)* How can I be a king in such a land as this where everybody counteracts me? All I do and say in Parliament has quite the opposite effect to what my purpose is, the Earl of Strafford came to London to assist me well aware of what a danger threatened his own person, and he didn't even get a chance to say one word in his own House of Lords before he was arrested. My archbishop Laud has already been sentenced to imprisonment for life for gross manipulation of the Church, and he will languish now forever in the Tower. All the men I trusted are in steadily increasing numbers leaving our country to preserve their lives, and Strafford, the most honourable man of both these isles, has been condemned in both the common parliamentary houses without any proof of any guilt. He has been judged and sentenced by one-sidedness and puritanic biased fear of someone's looking through the false obsession of fanaticism. The document referred to as the proof of Strafford's guilt does never mention England; Strafford wrote it probably with only Scotland on his mind. There was a need to fight in Scotland then but not in England. But this failing evidence was quite enough for prejudiced and angry puritans who only wanted to get rid of their most hated object. And now they demand my signature to ratify their meanness. They will have him sacrificed for all that he has done for me, and they will not allow me to do anything for him. My power is bereft me by this monstrous parliament which I now never more will be got rid of. They have made a law that Parliament can never be dissolved without another parliament at the same moment being called three months thereafter. I am stuck in this infernal trap of parliamentary perfectness and plenitude of power, and I have no power any more to even save the life of my most single faithful servant since the parliament unanimously has decided to have that man sacrificed to their new-fangled self-assumed infallibility. And I can nought but sign the condemnation of the Earl of Strafford although I am certain of his innocence, for that's the course of Parliament in their enforcement of their will against their monarch's, who is nowadays regarded only as a hindrance to democracy.

And even you, my holy bishops, drive me into base compliance with the parliamentary meanness by your stealthy shirking almost coward strange manoeuvres of conformity with popular caprice. (*signs the death-warrant*)

*Bishop 1 (to the other bishops while the King is signing)* The King is lost.

*Bishop 2* It's not the Earl of Strafford's warrant he is signing. It's the death-warrant of all his self-indulgent government.

*Bishop 3* He will once have to pay for his self-centredness, but not too much, I hope.

*Bishop 2* I never thought he actually could sign a death-warrant for someone innocent.

*Bishop 1* In politics that's something anyone could do, and this our king is proving now himself to be a man of vanity like every single politician in a powerful position.

*Bishop 2* All his best friends are deserting him and now escape the country. Who will finally remain to stay with him?

*Bishop 3* It looks as if the puritan enthusiasts will ultimately win as lonely victors with their cries of war. They will leave no one left to vie with their infallibility.

*Bishop 1* We have done all we could for our king. Come on, let's go.

*Bishop 2* Yes. We are also only human beings who desert a ship when it is sinking. *(The three bishops retire.)*

*(Strafford is seen sick and lonely in the Tower after two months of imprisonment.)*

*Strafford* What? Has actually the King signed my death-warrant? Has he not then realized the terrible judicial error that has been committed? I continued serving well my King when all his people and three countries failed their noble monarch by their cowardice, and therefore he has signed the hopeless death sentence of this his only loyal servant. It is too absurd! Do never put your trust in princes nor in sons of men, for in them there is no salvation, and especially if they have something to defend, for instance a position of the vanity of power, for such men will never hesitate to act like traitors against all humanity if only that serves selfishness. The more you love, protect and serve a man of power and position, the more heartlessly he will betray you. Charles, by sacrificing me you have signed the death sentence of yourself and of your government. Let my fate strike you with the same asperity with which you now have most unreasonably sentenced me to death for nothing except serving you. *(He vanishes in darkness.)*

*Charles (alone, with his pen still in his hand after having signed)* If even I will gain my people for this sacrifice and even become popular with Parliament I never will forgive myself for this most coward and supreme concession. If political necessity is cruel to such an inhuman degree I never will be happy, pure and free again until I have been liberated from all politics. You die, my good friend Strafford, with a curse against me on your bitter lips, a curse which is correct and just. I can not blame my parliament for being forced by them to this contrariness to all the written laws which all the same is lawful if according only to the parliament. But Parliament is now the sole establisher of laws, and that good Parliament is quite possessed by God.

#### Act IV scene 1.

*Count Rossetti* It seems to me, my Queen, as if the King was more a catholic than protestant. He speaks, he thinks, he acts just like a catholic. Where do you think he stands religiously?

*Henrietta* He doesn't hold a thing against catholicism, but he is slow and shy and hesitant. If he were not so mild he would have order in this country long ago.

*Rossetti* The parliamentary threat is worrying the pope. How far do you think Parliament will go?

*Henrietta* I promise you one thing. Whatever vows the parliament will cruelly exact from him, he never will be bound by them.

*Rossetti* Is that your personal reflection, or has he himself expressed it for a certainty?

*Henrietta* I know him and am certain of that there is not in this world any parliament that could bereave him of his native kingliness. His father failed to be convincing as a king, but he himself was born a king and will remain a king until he dies in every inch of his corporeal person.

*Rossetti* I have been dismissed by order of the parliament through your regretting husband. He was most polite, but the majority of puritans seems quite determined to throw out all catholics from this disturbed unstable country. Would you like me to say something to his holiness the pope?

*Henrietta* Just calm him down, and if this parliament insists on further trouble, tell him just that I negotiate with my French royal family. If the mad puritans will make a nuisance of themselves we shall take care of them with the support of France, of Ireland and of the newly reconverted Scotland.

*Rossetti* So then Scotland has converted faith again?

*Henrietta* My husband has gone up there and reconquered his own people. If he also manages to get all Ireland on his side against the vicious puritans the parliamentary power will be lost.

*Rossetti* And do you think that he could raise the catholics of Ireland?

*Henrietta* He must, or else I will not stand by his weak side but leave for France together with my mother. There at least no royal privilege will ever be disputed.

## Scene 2.

*Henrietta* You are a fool!

*Charles* My dear, the Scots are with me. Their rebellion is brought to an end, and even Ireland is now on our side. The House of Commons is perturbed and does not any longer know how it shall deal with me. The puritanic faction has lost all majority, and people have grown tired of their bleak fanaticism. The thing desired now is peace and monarchy restored. Archbishop Laud is quite forgotten in the prison of the Tower. They don't even dare to call for that old man's blood any more. They almost are quite pacified.

*Henrietta* And all the same you let the grossest agitators, murderers and traitors carry on their policy of stirring trouble upsetting the people! Have you already forgotten loyal Strafford and the massacred Sir Thomas Benstead? Not a drop of puritanic blood has yet been shed. Their only so called martyred victims they have against every law themselves let out from every prison. But your friends who fought for you, defended you and helped you when your rights were called in question they have been allowed to murder ruthlessly and without being even reprimanded for it! And right now your foremost enemy John Pym, that scoundrel, is exciting Parliament against you brain-washing the House of Commons with the prejudiced idea that you have mobilized all Ireland against England!

*Charles* Is John Pym, that honourable gentleman, inferring such a most infernal lie and advocating it?

*Henrietta* He does, and with him the four leaders of the crazy opposition.

*Charles* If he chooses to proceed on such a course he will himself plunge all the country into civil war.

*Henrietta* Then stop him, have him prosecuted as a traitor to his country, do something about it! If such senseless preachers are allowed their perfect licence, it will end by your own son and family and children being butchered by them!

*Charles* But what can I do, my consort?

*Henrietta* Why don't you arrest them? Are you not the legal monarch of this nation? Are you not responsible for all the future of this country? Have you lost your manhood? Have you not a future and a family to keep and to protect and to provide for? Go, you coward, or I will despise you! (*leaves decidedly*)

*Charles* There's a danger threatening the country. She is right. As king I have to interfere. The House of Commons has intrigued against me many times although I never did try anything against them. It is time for me to finally begin to answer them in their own language. Guards! Come! Follow me! We must to Parliament! (*Guards enter from the left and follow the upset monarch out to the right.*)

### Scene 3. The House of Commons.

*John Pym* I tell you, that the Queen conspires against us and with the perfect knowledge of the King to secretly support the Irish insurrection. It's their purpose to enforce absolutism by totally annihilating Parliament and all the rights of man which we so hard have fought to have secured with blood and sweat and tears, to quote John Donne the poet. She is planning to plunge our nation into civil war to the extreme affliction of our England. She and all her catholics must instantly be stopped!

*The Attorney General* Hereby it is my duty to inform this House of Commons that five members of this parliament have been found guilty of high treason.

*Herald* And it is my duty hereby to inform you that the King demands to have this instant these five members guilty of high treason now delivered to their court of justice and their prison.

*A member* This is too absurd. It is a serious violation of the liberty of Parliament.

*Another* The King has gone too far.

*John Pym* What did I tell you? Now we know that he won't hesitate to cross the limits of fair human decency! We should anticipate a coup d'état now any moment!

*A member* I have just had a notice from the Queen's own chamber-maid who warns us that the King is on his way to us with armed guards this very moment to arrest five leading members of our opposition.

*Another* We, must instantly demand for the protection of our Parliament, the liberty and of our House of Commons and our whole integrity, that these five leave at once to hide themselves until the crisis has been mastered.

*A third one* Mr. Pym! Escape from here with the accused and seek protection for the sake of God!

*John Pym* My gentlemen, you will not have to ask me twice. My friends, let's pull ourselves together and go under ground immediately! (*John Pym and four others leave at once.*)

*A member* Please hurry! (*The King enters with armed guards.*)

*Charles* Where is Mr. Pym and his accomplices?

*A member* They are not here, your majesty.

*Charles* That much can I see for myself. I ask you, gentlemen, to help me find them. You know very well that in the matter of high treason no privileges are any longer valid. These escaped birds cannot be protected. Where have they absconded, and where are the cowards hiding?

*Speaker (falling on his knees)* I apologize, my Lord and King, but no one in this House can answer you. As Speaker I have neither eyes to see nor tongue to speak in this place but as this House is pleased to direct me which is my sole master here although you have appointed me yourself.

*Charles (nonplussed)* I see the birds are flown. We have no more in here to do. (*leaves with his men*)

*The entire House* Infringement of our privilege! Infringement of our privilege! Infringement of our privilege! (*The cries go on until all the King's men are gone. When the storm is over:*)

*Speaker* Gentlemen, let us resume our business. We had matters to discuss. The latest topic was the Queen's rebellious acting and the probable impending civil war.

#### Scene 4. Dover by the sea.

*Henrietta* It's all my fault. I never wanted this.

*Charles* My dear, no human being wanted this. It's no one's fault. Who could imagine that your chamber-maid was in communication with the puritans? From spontaneity a word escaped you, and that caused an avalanche which buried our last hopes to keep our sovereign integrity.

*Henrietta* My darling, please forgive me.

*Charles* There is nothing to forgive. All things will fall out as a higher power more supreme than ours planned it maybe for the best of all. It might end up in an ideal democracy. The only cloud on our sky is the fanatics, the tremendous puritans, who first chased your own mother from the country and now you yourself.

*Henrietta* I cannot stay here. I must first think of our children.

*Charles* You are right. I am myself quite forced away from you. My life from now on will be only war and exile. We had ten long years of happiness together which brought us abundantly all blessings of a royal life. Now fortune's hang-over is waiting for me with a mortal strife against the puritans and their one-sidedness and blind intolerance, and that most fateful struggle I must fight alone. The best result I

can expect is that our son one day will find a less aggressive people to be ruler of than this bewildered bigotry. The tragedy that now begins may carry the advantage of a new experience to our nation which could turn the future into something of what we have dreamed about: a country free from all religious prejudices and exaggerations. But we will not probably ourselves be granted the fair show of seeing such a sun ascend on such a beautiful horizon.

*Henrietta* If only our attempt in Parliament had been successful! One thing only I could never pardon or forgive your English brethren: that, on the same day on which you brought your family away from London and to safety, they paid homage to and glorified the five accursed traitors as the greatest heroes of the country. They will now do anything to further their own mass psychosis tyranny and aggrandize all that is done against them to preposterous proportions. All their politics is nothing but exaggerations, lies and biased propaganda. The bedevilled puritans are dressed up in the robes of vanity, the heroism of vaunting and the shallowness of exhibitionism, and such a masquerade I cannot bear!

*Charles* Be calm, my dear. They are but human beings. And the stew they are preparing for themselves will not be any tastier to them than it is to our royal palate. You will witness yet both cataclysms and apocalypses.

*Henrietta* Dearest, fare thee well. I'm sorry that I'm now deserting you in such a moment of your need for a much happier country, the felicitous and lovely France, where monarchy stands firm forever. Pure necessity is what now forces me away from you.

*Charles* This direful divorce is only natural as punishment for my not having always done the rightest thing towards my people and yourself.

*Henrietta* I will be back as soon as you have won the war and done away with all the puritans.

*Charles* The burning fury of the puritans can only be extinguished by themselves, and that is probably exactly what will happen. It remains for me to stand outside their strange affairs as much as possible.

*Henrietta* No King can stand outside the fate of his own nation.

*Charles* No, I think you may be right. Good-bye, my dearest.

*Henrietta* Darling, take good care. Farewell.

*(They embrace and are parted. She hurries away from there.)*

*Charles* I will not see my happiness more in this life. But I am grateful for that life at least allowed me to acquaint myself with happiness. *(waves farewell, then turns around and walks away from there, his head bent in sorrow.)*

*A soldier* Your majesty, your army of most gallant cavaliers is now expecting you to lead them in the new war for the liberation of the monarchy of our country.

*Charles* I am ready now. Let's join our troops. *(exeunt)*

Act V scene 1.

*A member of Parliament* Your majesty, we must demand that you return to London. We are quite aware of that all blunders, misdemeanour and anomalies committed by your government were not committed by yourself but only by your bad advisors. We allude especially to the manipulation of religion.

*Charles (angry)* You demand that I return, and in whose name, if I may ask? Who is to order me about? You cringe to me just to appease your critics and in such a manner that you make it quite impossible for me with all my best intentions to accept, above all your demeanour, but the falseness of your sinuous methods too. But in good time God will expose the most preposterous imposture of your poor misguided puritans, and I will triumph over you all on that day dead or alive! What do you want from me exactly? Have I broken against any of your new religious laws? Point out that law to me in that case! You have asked that of me that was never asked of any king before. You never can demand of any king that he should cease to be a king!

*The member* Your majesty, with all respect, but such an answer doesn't clarify your actual intentions.

*Charles* A high intelligence like yours is not required to draw that conclusion from my answers. Any boy could understand that even without sitting in your parliament! But I am not unreasonable. I agree to your demands concerning the religion even though I know that the catholic Ireland never will.

*The member* Then you have only to recall the accusations of high treason against our puritanic generals and end the state of war immediately.

*Charles* Poor man, do you not understand that traitors are but traitors? What would be the fate of our lands if all destructive powers were made legal? The political intentions of you puritans is to completely have all laws abolished except those who legalize your own licentiousness and self-indulgence!

*The member* What you want then is a civil war.

*Charles* No, Sir! Your party makes it unavoidable by its pretensions of infallibility!

*The member* Your majesty, then we must firmly disregard all invitations from your side to peace until the force of civil war has fulfilled England's destiny.

*Charles* I see no other choice as long as puritans demand the king's annihilation.

*The member* Next time you will hear from our weapons.

*Charles* I have England on my side and Ireland and Scotland. You have only London.

*The member* That is of no remedy to our conflict. *(leaves)*

Scene 2. The House of Commons.

*William Prynne* Former Archbishop of Canterbury, I accuse you of corruption of our most immaculate religion whereby you have totally transgressed all laws and trampled them under your dirty feet. Your course of action is a blasphemy and full

effrontery against all England, you are nothing but a reptile who has substituted heaven with your hell of unforgivable manipulations, crimes and heresies, and I have not forgotten all the years I had to spend in prison for your sake as martyr for the cause of the in spite of all victorious righteous puritans! You are a swine that should be hanged and butchered! You may listen for yourself to the demands of shrieking mobs and masses outside in the square who all enthusiastically and unanimously cry together for your most besotted rotten blood as a revenge of small proportions to the massacres and bloodsheds of this civil war!

*Earl Robert Devereux of Essex* I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but is this really what we promised to our progeny, the thing that we called freedom, at the risking of our lives? Did we secure our victory at Marston Moor in order to get rid of royal tyranny to let the mob acquire strength of tyranny instead? Did we defy the King's oppression only to become oppressed instead by common violence of the licentious masses? (*is seated*)

*Prynne* My lord Robert Devereux of Essex, you have gained the honour you deserved from leading our war achieving during two years nothing but a twentieth part of what our friend Oliver Cromwell skilfully accomplished in one single battle. I propose that the good Earl of Essex is relieved of his command. What does the false priest and traitor, the worst church corrupter of our history, this abject fellow William Laud, say in his poor defence?

*Laud* I lived and died according to the protestantic faith that was established in our country, and I was a most obedient servant to my church and the established forms of our religion. What I might have done of evil in my service was, I do assure you all, completely unintentional and never even thought of.

*Prynne* William Laud, you're lying as befits the dog and ass and persecutor of our poor defenseless martyrs! You will hang in public, for the popular majority which does condemn you is more certain than the whole entire church.

*Laud* You took my life already as you butchered the good Earl of Strafford without legal right or cause. His sentence will be mine but this time without royal signature. My blood and all the strength of my eternal curse will therefore only fall on you and only save and bless the King.

*Prynne* That is enough! Take out the guilty pervert and debaucher of the Church! We will proceed to a division.

*(Laud is taken out. The sparse House of Commons takes a vote.)*

### Scene 3. Oxford.

*Denzil Holles* Your majesty, your cause is lost. You have no chance now against Parliament. That's why we have come here in order to negotiate.

*Charles* With the same right exactly. Mr. Denzil Holles, I can negotiate with you quite certain of my victory.

*Bulstrode Whitelocke* How many lives then will you sacrifice in this most hopeless deadlock? Thousands more? Ten thousands more? A hundred thousand more? Perhaps a million men in all? Consider that your own men bleed the most. The only ones who fare well by the war is that Oliver Cromwell's hardest and most negative fanatic ironsides.

*Charles* And what do you have then to offer which is positive?

*Holles* We only ask of you to give your signature to the convention.

*Charles* Should then presbyterianism be made a law to all those who prefer to think in their own ways, like all the catholics of Ireland and every English sensible free-thinker?

*Holles* Toleration of exceptions will not do. And certain royalists must be delivered to the highest court of Parliament.

*Charles* What royalists?

*Holles* Prince Rupert first of all but also Prince Maurice.

*Charles* So you demand that I should offer to your parliamentary bloodthirst my own nephews?

*Holles* That is the decision of our perfect Parliament.

*Whitelocke* We are not here to jump into conclusions in the matter of what Parliament will do about its enemies. We are here only to deliver unto you the terms reached by the Parliament.

*Charles* So you are then anonymous post-officers delivering to me the ultimatum stating that I have to sacrifice two of my closest kin to parliamentary partial licence. Well then, gentlemen, perform your duties then as post-men to your merrily capricious and inventive Parliament. I must insist that you receive my answer sealed and that you bring it with the seal unbroken to your blessed Parliament. (*sits down and writes and seals the document*)

*Holles (to Whitelocke)* Is he about to pull our legs?

*Whitelocke (to Holles)* We must do as he says. There is no harm in it.

*Holles* Your majesty, how do we know that what you write is not insulting to the Parliament?

*Charles* My dear good man, you must deliver what I write to Parliament were it a ballad or a song of Robin Hood. (*hands over the document and leaves.*)

*Whitelocke* We must do as he says.

*Holles* And if there is some trick in it? No, we must look into it, so that we at least are well prepared for any royal insult.

*Whitelocke* I refuse to open it. It is not honest.

*Holles* When the welfare of the country is at stake all measures of defence against the King are honest. (*breaks the seal and reads.*)

*Whitelocke* Well, what does it say?

*Holles (baffled)* "I hereby must request for a safe conduct to Westminster for two of my own advisers to bring forth my formal answer to your parliamentary offer." Signed "King Charles".

Scene 4. Southwell. Four Scotsmen appear.

- 1 Do you know who landed here?  
2 I gather it could not be Cromwell.  
1 No, it is the King in royal lowness.  
2 Nay, you cannot speak the truth.  
3 What does he want?  
1 It seems he wants to come to terms with us.  
2 He has no terms to deal with. Is he not aware his cause is lost?  
4 He probably is of the notion that a King's cause never can be lost.  
2 Aye, that is probable.  
3 Does he know anything about the nature of our contacts with the parliament in London?  
1 I am certain he knows nothing of it.  
4 Well, then we must certainly have terms to deal with. We could probably make him at last come to his senses.  
3 Let King Charles the fallen and deplorable and stranded be admitted to our circle.

*(Charles is admitted.)*

*Charles* I implore you, gentlemen, of your most urgent aid since Scotland now is all that I have left to put my faith in.

4 Your most venerable majesty, we do regret your accident at Naseby.

*Charles* So do I. It was one horse that failed. That bolting horse led all the cavalry astray and gave Oliver Cromwell free hands to accomplish his most bloody massacre.

4 The truth is that we now are cornered with yourself as the result. The only way out is for you to put your name to the convention and to legalize the proper presbyterianism both here, in England and in Ireland.

*Charles (astounded)* My countrymen, this did I not expect from you. It is the same one-sided and intolerant demand that London makes to my complete disgust.

1 You have no choice, your majesty. We don't want any fights with Cromwell.

*Charles* Just because he is quite ruthless as a winner. I should have foreseen that my materialistic Scotsmen rather should prefer the ruthless violence of unjust victory than all the righteousness of the defenceless injured loser.

2 This is not an argument of morals. We have had enough intolerable catholics here in this country who corrupted us and our church to nearly total ruin thanks to your protecting them. That was the origin of your good civil war.

*Charles* No, you mistake yourself. The origin was the fanatics who just sought some kind of outlet for their grim aggressiveness, and that, forsooth, did Cromwell and his war-mad ironsides and hooligans find really well enough. And I must warn you, my good countrymen, against your own naivety. As things are now developing

your Cromwell and his ironsides will be the only ones to sit in Parliament when they have finished executing and suppressing every fragment of an opposition.

3 We can't put off on our demands. We can't have any Cromwell nor a single catholic more in this Scotland ruffling our rhythm.

*Charles* You don't know what's best for your own good.

3 Is that your only answer to our terms?

*Charles* I can not compromise with what I am. I can't abandon my untouchable conviction of the reasonableness of freedom of religion and of conscience in the nation which I am responsible for to our Lord.

3 We are compelled to force you then to realize the better sense of Parliament.

4 You cannot rule alone without the people giving you consent and their support. The first land you ignored was Scotland, your own fatherland. By your own incapacity and lack of judgement you have managed to since then turn your entire kingdom against your own so called holy but in fact conceited office.

1 We must therefore now, King Charles, perform our duty and put you under arrest. (*He is arrested.*)

*Charles* You dare arrest me, your own legal king, like any criminal and dangerous unthinking half-wit living only by rude force? How can you thus humiliate me?

2 We co-operate long since, your majesty, with the established parliament of colonel Cromwell. What we now must do is only for the welfare of yourself and of your country.

3 Guards! Take out the prisoner and bring him into custody!

*(Guards enter immediately and take care of the paralysed King.)*

*Charles (to the Scots)* I cannot understand how you could find it reasonable to commit such a mistake.

1 And we, your majesty, will never understand what we did to deserve a monarch who from sheer stupidity plunged our countries into such an unimaginable civil war. (*The guards walk out with the King.*)

2 What do you think you're gaining on imprisoning the King?

3 An end of war, peace in our lands, perhaps some order and a good solution to our problem.

2 The last thing you mentioned we will never have. For whatever will we do to give our country peace it will be at the expense of the king Charles Stuart, and that will not ever give us any peace of mind.

#### Scene 5. Westminster Hall.

*Bulstrode Whitelocke* I must now in front of you all, you little remnants of the House of Commons, most concernedly advise against this dirty litigation against our crowned monarch. I must warn you: if you will insist on such a course of action it will have but one significance: that you from the beginning without trial and with only a minority of Parliament as partial jury judged your King and sentenced him to

death. The King cannot be sentenced by a worldly court, and such a court as this cannot judge any man. I hereby join the former eighty members of this parliament who now in definite majority have quite abandoned this completely dictatorial infallible established monster of a terrible rump parliament. (*rises from his chair and leaves.*)

*Cromwell (rising in fury)* I tell you that we will cut off his head and with the crown upon it!

*A puritan* There, there, Oliver Cromwell, take it easy and calm down! Hysterical and sentimental outbursts will not better any case.

(*Charles is brought in and placed with his back towards the audience before the servants of law. He is keeping his hat on and placed in a chair. Along the galleries on the sides of the scene some trial audience is seen.*)

*John Cook* The Parliament of England being now assembled, we hereby accuse King Charles the First of the most cruel outrageous treason against all his nation and his people, having tried to make himself completely autocratic, thereby breaking all the laws of all this nation, church and parliament. The consequences of his actions have been six long years of civil war and constant bloodsheds making thousands of his people guiltless victims to the ruthlessness, capriciousness and senselessness of the accused.

*Charles* My good Sir, I must ask your leave here to protest and ask: by what authority and law has here the King been brought to trial to be judged by a most partial bunch of puritans?

*John Cook* You are accused and brought to trial by the democratic rights and people of the House of Commons.

*Charles* I can not see more than maybe twenty out of the one hundred and fifty members of your House of Commons gathered here to sacrifice me as a scape-goat to the national catastrophe called civil war originated solely by the very hands of all those gathered here today to vote for their king's death. I cannot see that this minority can be supported by the people since this parliamentary rump has now been sitting here for nine long years and even without ever being re-elected. So sad remains of such an antiquated parliament I can but call a jugglery that isn't even funny. You are turning our whole judicial system into something of an object of derision to posterity, most honourable gentlemen, by staging this most sordid, base and awful parody of how a king can be disposed of only by obscure manoeuvres outlawing the law.

*Bradshaw* Shut up, you monster of impertinence! You are not present here to be the prosecutor of this court! This court is present to condemn and prosecute yourself!

*Charles* I beg your pardon, Sir, but, with respect, this fragment of a parliament, bereft of half its House of Commons and its House of Lords in its entirety, the self-surviving rump of which nine years ago was constituted and elected only by a fragment of the population, has no legal right to sit in judgement of the highest governing authority of this united kingdom whatsoever.

*Bradshaw* Keep your blasted mouth shut! We are constituted by the people, and as democratic representatives of all the people we have the support of all the nation as we sit in judgement on your person. You have blatantly betrayed the people's confidence and faith in you, although that people gave you all the power in the world!

*Charles* Good sergeant Bradshaw, you have misinterpreted the situation. I was never chosen by the people. My position was the heritage of almost thousand years of British kings. Their power is hereditary and has ever been so as established by our very oldest laws. The English King's position as an inviolability is the basis of our national stability and constitution. You should know that as a lawyer.

*Bradshaw* But you have abused your powerful responsibility to treason and your high position to corruption of the sanctity of our religion and the Church of England! And you have directly caused the civil war!

*Charles* With equal right I can accuse you of the same misdeed and not just you in person but all blessed puritans of England. You can not maintain before the world and make humanity believe that you have any right to judge me.

*Bradshaw* We don't care about the world. Our duty is to administer proper justice.

*Charles* That most proper justice is dictated wholly by Oliver Cromwell, who from the beginning sentenced me to death without a trial as the absolute and perfect judge of all our country with the right of violence alone and with the rude force of his troops as undisputable and perfect means.

*Bradshaw* Enough! Away with the presumptuous man of utter insolence! The court is now adjourned!

*Charles (being taken out)* Do not believe that I fear any one of you or any executioner of yours.

*Bradshaw* To hell with you! *(The King is taken out, and the court is dissolved in disorder.)* We can't go on like this. We must have that man sentenced, done away with, executed and forever gotten rid of.

*Various voices (among the audience of the galleries)* God save the King!

Confounded treason! Treason! *(They fight on the galleries.)*

*Cook* Obviously we must proceed directly to his sentence next time. If he tries another trick, if he insults us or humiliates us once again, just interrupt his speech.

*Bradshaw* This business did not come off quite as well as everyone had wished. And have you noticed that he doesn't stumble any longer on his words?

*Cromwell* Yes. And the common people hear each word he's saying. We are not proceeding well at all. We have to hurry on with the proceedings and get that man sentenced. *(The puritans break it up.)*

Scene 6. The same. Order has been restored.

*Bradshaw* On this second day of trial we ask the accused to answer our accusations promptly so that we will not lose valuable time.

*Charles* I must refuse to answer to this so called court until it has become legitimate.

*Bradshaw* Don't start all that again.

*Charles* You are not here disputing the existence of the King. You are disputing the entire basis of all justice in this country, and as most unrighteously accused I must defend that basis with my life at least.

*Bradshaw* We have had quite enough of your disgusting trouble-making figure! You have no right to insult this proper court!

*Charles* My good man, with respect, you interrupt me purposely so that the people shouldn't hear me. If the King of England cannot walk in safety keeping his own property, no man in England can expect to do so either.

*A clerk* Give an answer to the accusations!

*Another* Let's get to the point!

*Charles* I cannot answer to false accusations made against me by a false court of usurpers.

*A judge (Colonel John Hewson)* You disgusting monomaniac! (*rushes forward and spits the King in his face*) Don't be so bloody damned sure of yourself! You can never stop the course of justice anyway.

*Charles* Well, Sir, (*wiping his face*) God certainly hath justice in store both for you and me.

*Bradshaw* Attorney of this court, perform your duty!

*The clerk (reads from a document)* King Charles Stuart, you are here accused by your own people of a number of the highest crimes and treasons, which you already have heard. The court requires that you answer guilty or not guilty to the accusation.

*Charles* I refuse since this court is more contrary to law than any court has ever been in England.

*Bradshaw* Sir! Let it suffice now with your most accursed insults! You alone are contrary to law by shedding British blood most affluently, turning all the catholics of Europe against us, creating havoc everywhere and causing numberless rebellions...

*Charles* Sir, you speak as if I personally had gone marching forth massacring all people. This procedure seems to rather be the privilege of Mr. Cromwell and his ironed forces nowadays, since by that practical procedure they have actually succeeded in the act of bringing their own king at bay while they instead crowned violence to be their ruler which they gave full sovereignty and infallibility.

*Bradshaw* We do not listen even to your balderdash. I pray you, judge, to read the verdict.

*Charles* Am I not entitled to my own defence before I am condemned?

*Cook* In this case you have nothing to defend. And furthermore, you have refused to answer all the accusations.

*Bradshaw* Hereby the committed prisoner is declared guilty of high treason among other crimes committed against the free population of this nation, which fact has been demonstrated and proved true.

*A woman from the galleries* It is a lie!

*Another woman* Oliver Cromwell is the tyrant!

*(Turmoil. The women vanish. Order is gradually restored.)*

*Bradshaw* The committed prisoner will get a chance to speak on the condition that he doesn't call in question the legality of our parliamentary court.

*Charles* The only thing I wish to say is that I have an earnest wish to be in legal fashion tried before the House of Commons and the House of Lords. You may well take it as a personal appeal to normal lawful courts of justice which I could accept myself as legally correct. I happen to at least know something about law, and every amateur of law must realize that this affected humbug of a court is nothing but the weirdest shadow of a real one.

*John Downe (furious)* Parliament says no!

*Charles* In that case this is nothing but the common mob's anonymous and coward immolation of the individual. I am the single chosen person to be liquidated by a flock mentality. It is the expiration of the law, of humanism, of civilisation and not only that of England.

*Bradshaw* You deny the court's authority and therefore have no voice more in the matter. Consequently you, Charles Stuart, are hereby pronounced most guilty of high treason and of other crimes as murderer and traitor, tyrant and an enemy of mankind for which you are sentenced properly to death. You will be publicly decapitated outside your own former home and palace of Whitehall where all the world can watch the spectacle, which is our purpose.

*Charles* This is most improper! I refuse to take the sentence seriously.

*Bradshaw* Sir, you have no more right to speak now after the pronouncement of the sentence. Guards, lead off the prisoner!

*Charles* I have not finished yet! Think of the rights of man and not of your own prejudice and hatred! Think of the historical and natural retaliation which must be inevitable!

*Bradshaw* We have finished. Take the sentenced man to his imprisonment and execution.

*(Charles is taken out. The court is dissolved in turbulence.)*

*The End.*