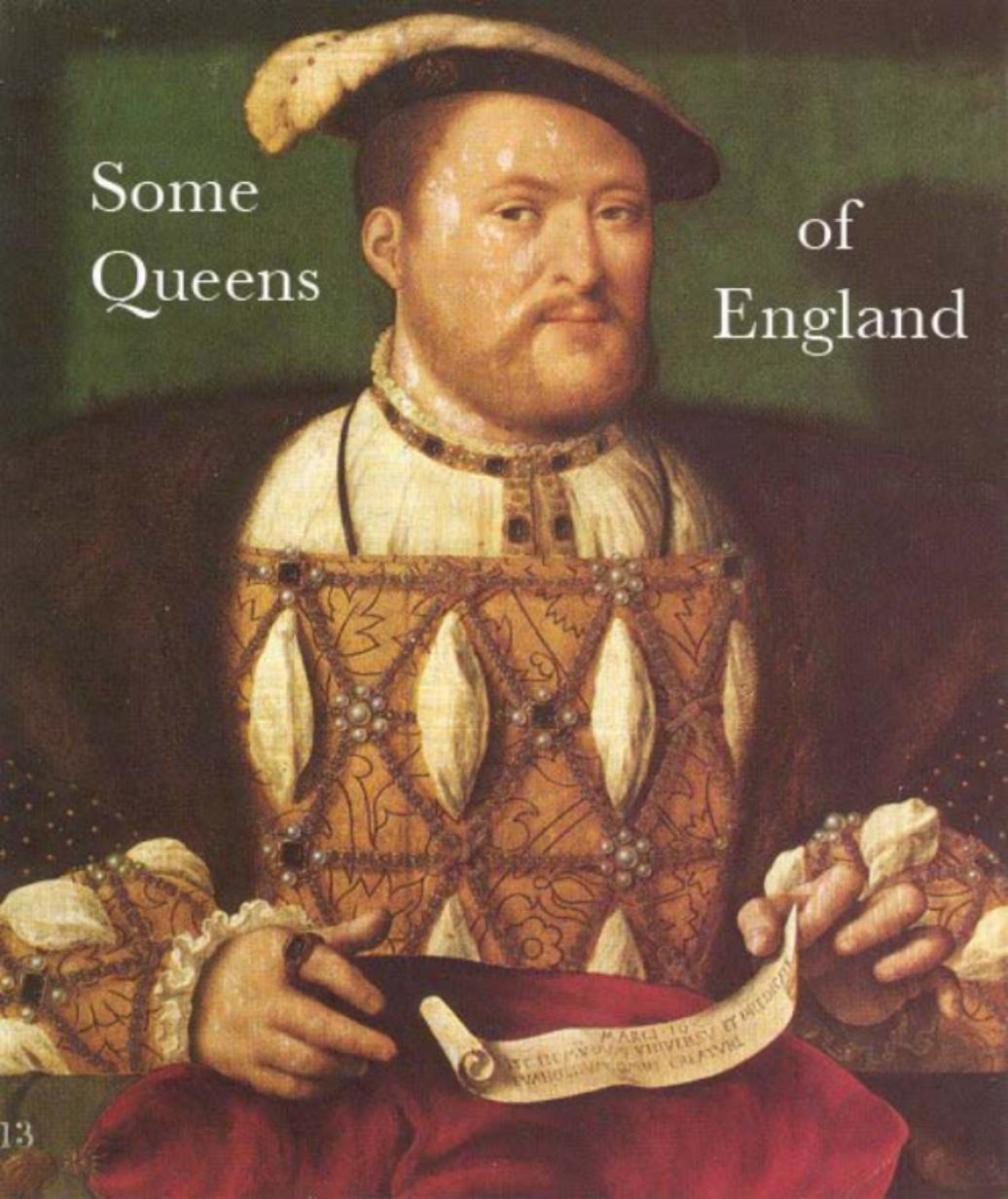


Some
Queens

of
England



Some Queens of England

a Comedy in Three Parts

each part presenting the characters and fates of three Tudor Queens,

by Christian Lanciai (1972)

Part One.

Dramatis Personae:

The Prologue
King Henry the Eighth
Duke of Norfolk
Duke of Suffolk
Duke of Buckingham
Catherine of Aragon
Isabel, her maid
Anne Boleyn
Henrietta, her maid
Jane Seymour
Bartholomew, and
Horace, courtiers
Sir Thomas More
Erasmus Rotterdamus
Thomas Cromwell
Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury
guards
a doctor
and other people of the Court

The stage is London and thereabouts, 1509-1537.

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with many thanks to Leslie Pendrill for corrections and suggestions in 1990,
finally digitalized in February 2008.

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The Prologue (in front of the curtain)

Do not, I pray, regard this play as a display of history, for it is not. It is merely a play, a game, a merry sketch, perhaps inspired by history but not at all resembling it. The king you shall see is not King Henry the Eighth; he is merely a dressed up actor who looks more like a clown than a king. And all the others are dressed up fools too, except those, of course, who are naked, but let's hope indeed that none is in such a dreadful condition. I've said enough; the rest I leave to those whose business it is to act. *(exit)*

Act I scene 1. Westminster Abbey.

(The coronation ceremonies are reaching their height. The Archbishop and the King stand in the middle, and all the peerage of England is assembled.)

Henry God's blood! Hurry on!

(The Archbishop continues the ceremony. After some while, Henry is finally crowned.)

(to the duke of Norfolk nearby) At last! For this I have waited three hours!

(the ceremony continues) Will this eternal cursed torture never end?

(the ceremony is continued) What did I do to deserve this? Come, come, archbishop, hurry on!

(the ceremony is prolonged and, after some while, at last pompously concluded. In great glory the King is hailed, and so on, before he retires.)

Norfolk *(following him)* How fare you, my King? Is the crown heavy, or is your kingdom bearable?

Henry It is quite bearable, Norfolk. It is even delightful, but the ceremony was long, Norfolk, unbearably long. I am glad it was the last time in my life I had to suffer it.

Norfolk You'll never know, my King, perhaps one day you'll abdicate and then only regret it to be crowned once more.

Henry *(laughing)* Ha-ha, Norfolk, a good joke. Perhaps indeed I will. You never know what old man Fortune holds in store for you. But now, Norfolk, tell me, whom should I marry?

Norfolk Preferably someone who is favoured by Europe. If you marry, for instance, a Spanish princess, Europe will be delighted with your choice and respect your kingdom ever after.

Henry And what Spanish princesses are there to be courted? To hell with this crown! *(casts it off)* It chafes my head. Go on, Norfolk, tell me about the desirable royal maidens of Europe.

Norfolk There is Catherine of Aragon who was to marry your brother...

Henry Aye, I remember her, Norfolk. A good and graceful lady she was. She is the girl I will marry. Norfolk, arrange the match, and tell the archbishop to arrange the marriage.

Norfolk But, is it wise to be so hasty, my King?

Henry Wise? Do you ask me if I am wise? Begone, Norfolk, and carry out my orders! I will marry, by God, I will! Assemble the archbishops and dukes and and peers that must, and prepare my wedding. Go to't, Norfolk!

Norfolk Yes, your majesty. *(exit)*

Henry He asks me if I am wise, as if there was any doubt about it. Why should I not marry speedily, like everyone else? Why should I wait to get a wife, while everyone else does not hesitate to woo ten, couple with twenty and marry the best of them within twenty minutes? Why should I wait? Why should I be wise? There is no need for wisdom in matrimonial affairs. *(enter Buckingham)* Yes, Buckingham?

Buckingham How does your majesty feel after having been crowned with the glorious burden of his father?

Henry Only well, Buckingham. But what is your business?

Buckingham I come with efforts to dissuade you from further warfare.

Henry Charles the Fifth stands by me, doesn't he?

Buckingham Yes, so far, your majesty, but...

Henry Pray no buts, Buckingham. As long as the mightiest emperor of Europe fights by my side I have nothing to be afraid of losing.

Buckingham Except your men's blood, your majesty. What exactly is your purpose with fighting?

Henry More power, Buckingham. More cities, more harbours, and more wealth, Buckingham. And besides, it is a good sport.

Buckingham Do you actually enjoy warring, your majesty?

Henry I do, Buckingham, as long as the war proceeds well.

Buckingham You are not like your father.

Henry And you are not unlike your father, who raped your mother when she visited dirtiest London. Go hence, Buckingham.

Buckingham Your father at least never insulted me.

Henry My mother at least was chaste. Hence, Buckingham, or I will chop off your head!

Buckingham (*aside*) You'll brag less when you're married.

Henry What was that you said?

Buckingham Nothing, your majesty, but remember my words: I don't like the war.

Henry And I don't like you. Away, buffer! (*kicks the duke out*)

Ha-ha-ha!

Now, let's have dinner. Boy, take that ridiculous night-cap to my bed-chamber. (*indicates the crown, which the nearest page carefully picks up from the floor and carries away.*)

My stomach is sad. Come, I must humour it by allowing it some repose at a banquet. And at the same time I'll think of my sweet coming Catherine. Come, music! (*enter clowns and musicians*) Let's all now enjoy a delightful evening of music and dancing and eating by the dinner-table. Come, all! I will lead the way. (*exeunt*)

Scene 2. Spain.

(*Catherine of Aragon sits in her chamber preparing herself for the night.*

Her maid is doing her hair.)

Catherine Tell me, sweet Isabel, what does the English king look like? Has he an awful temper, as they say?

Isabel I can tell you he is a terrible creature. Yes, his temper is awful. And he looks like a beast.

Catherine His father was quite handsome.

Isabel Nay, his father was an even ruder beast than he. I remember once how he slapped me behind and laughed afterwards with his black awful teeth. He was indeed a beast of the very rudest kind, I can tell you. And his son who now is King is like his father or worse.

Catherine Have you seen king Henry?

Isabel Aye, I have seen him. And you have seen him too.

Catherine Oh, when?

Isabel When? When you were in England, of course. You were once supposed to wed his brother, were you not?

Catherine Yes, but that was ages ago. The king of England today was then just a piteous and awkward little boy. I want to know what he is like today.

Isabel If you remember him as a wee little innocent boy you remember wrong, princess. He was a rude little beast then, and today he is a much bigger and ruder beast. And as he continues to grow, he will ever continue getting ruder and bigger and beastlier than he is already.

Catherine Isabel, you must not go too far. No one is like that picture you are giving me of noble king Henry. He is not a beast, and his father was handsome.

Isabel He is rude nevertheless. And if you call his father handsome, we must not forget that beasts actually are handsome sometimes. There are handsome horses and bears, for instance.

Catherine You speak nonsense, Isabel. Tell me now instead about his features.

Isabel He is big and fat.

Catherine And? What is he more than big and fat?

Isabel He is just big and fat.

Catherine Has he no face?

Isabel Yes.

Catherine Is it handsome? Is it manlike? What is it like?

Isabel It is big and fat.

Catherine You are hopeless, Isabel. Leave me now, I'll manage the rest by myself.

Isabel As you wish, princess. (*exit*)

Catherine She is an old garrulous crow, but nevertheless I like her. She is good company in moments of boredom and distress, and she waits upon me well. Therefore I will not be cross with her. But I do wish she would tell me a little about the King that I am going to meet and marry. After all, I know nothing about him except that he is king of England. Maybe for a princess like me, that should be enough. But I am a woman also, and I hate and abhor to be bartered away by my royal family like any cow or pig to a country farmer. And I am afraid of landing in the arms of possible unhappiness. Oh Lord, help me! Let the King of England be an ideal king, an ideal husband, and an ideal man! That is all I wish. If he be strong, virtuous and faithful, I know that will make me happy for the rest of my life. The only fear I have is that he might disdain me. I am some years older than he is, and there is no fate worse for any woman than to become disdained. O sweet sunshine of heaven, smile upon me! Amen.

Scene 3. Dover.

(*enter the King, Norfolk and escorts*)

Henry Is this where Spanish Kate is going to land?

Norfolk It is, my King.

Henry Are you quite sure that she did not aim for Plymouth?

Norfolk Quite sure.

Henry Or Portsmouth?

Norfolk Most sure, my King.

Henry Let's just hope then that her ships have not got lost. What are we to do if they have?

Norfolk Their captains are certainly able to manage them well, my King.

Henry Do you say that Spanish captains are reliable?

Norfolk Almost, your majesty. They are able.

Henry Let's just hope so. But I wouldn't be too sure, since they are all missing. Didn't Columbus get lost as he went to India?

Norfolk He believed he came to India.

Henry But he got lost and ended up in the wrong direction, didn't he? And wasn't he a Spanish captain?

Norfolk Genoese, my King.

Henry Is there any difference?

Norfolk I wouldn't be too sure.

Henry Neither would I, and with such a captain, I would never trust a Spanish captain again to find his way all right. But look, Norfolk! There they are, on the horizon!

Norfolk Quite so, my King.

Henry Are you not happy, Norfolk? Doesn't your blood rush with excitement? Isn't the world whirling around you in stupendous delirium of exhilaration? Aren't you elated at all, like me?

Norfolk You are to be married, your majesty, not I. It's your bride coming in, not mine.

Henry Perhaps you are right. But come. Let us go down to the quays and greet her when she comes, and her captains and crews and escorts as well. I am amazed they found their way after all.

Norfolk I told you so, your majesty. Once at sea, you have to be an able seaman, or else you are all at sea.

Henry That was just my point, Norfolk. Maybe the Spanish got lost but found their way by getting the wrong one, like Columbus.

Norfolk Fortunately there was no battle expecting them, only the deliverance of a princess.

Henry Sometimes I marvel at you, Norfolk. Well, she will certainly not be delivered of any princesses here, since all she has to do is to deliver boys.

Norfolk I hope she will know her job and duty.

Henry I hope so too, or I wouldn't marry her.
(*They go down.*)

Scene 4. Dover.

(*enter King Henry's escorts on the left and Catherine's on the right.*
Then enter Henry and Catherine who meet in the middle of the stage.)

Henry Welcome to England, your highness. This place is called Dover.

Catherine (*kneeling in humility*) I am honoured by your personal presence at my disembarkment, your majesty. And pray receive my duly gifts and respects.
(*She makes room for five servants who present Henry with overwhelming gifts.*)

Henry This overwhelms me, good princess. You and your family have already sent me more than enough from Spain.
(*She produces another five servants with even greater gifts.*)

Good princess, rise! It is not right that you should kneel on the ground before me. I am the one to humble myself to your surpassing excellent and stupefying generosity.
(*She produces more servants and more gifts.*)

Queen Catherine, enough! Rise, and let us immediately go to London and there be wed before the coming evening! (*He offers his arm to the bewildered Catherine.*) Norfolk, blow a retreat to London! Set the armies and horses and escorts moving! Come, Catherine! To London, and from there to Westminster!
(*He almost drags her away and disappears. Exeunt all after him in great confusion.*)

Scene 5. Westminster Abbey.
(Henry and Catherine are being united by the Archbishop.)

Henry Hurry on, Archbishop! I will not suffer here again for three hours! I have wars to fight, a church to lay my hands on, a fleet to build, and, above all, a wife and Queen to worship. So hurry on, Archbishop!
(The ceremony continues.)

Act II, scene 1. Westminster.
(Two ladies, Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour, sit together embroidering.)

Jane Do you like the king's Spanish queen?
Anne No. Do you?
Jane I think she has a good poise.
Anne Nonsense! She is a catholic witch, nothing more and nothing less.
Jane You shouldn't say so. But I have to agree with you that she is rather too catholic.
Anne The king has not been seen for many days in her company.
Jane Your gossip is ugly. Is it true?
Anne Of course it is true. He disdains her.
Jane Why?
Anne I don't really know, but I have my guesses.
Jane Let's hear your guesses!
Anne I think the king looks down upon her because she hasn't given him a son yet, despite his efforts.
Jane If that is true he is a cruel king.
Anne Or she is an incompetent lady.
Jane Hush! You oughtn't to speak like that.
Anne The sooner people face truths and facts, the better.
Jane You don't know the real truths and facts. You only have your guesses.
Anne But my guesses have in all my life proved true.
Jane I think you are lying.
Anne I never lie, except in front of the king.
Jane Do you lie to the king?
Anne Everyone does who wants to keep his head on his shoulders.
Jane I never lied to him.
Anne You are too good to have anything to hide.
Jane What have you to hide?
Anne Only what I just told you: the fact that everyone knows what is going on between him and the catholic nun.
Jane I am glad that you hide your dirty imaginative guesses.
Anne Which will come true. They always do.
Jane I doubt it.
Anne I don't.
Jane I think you are too sure of yourself, which might prove dangerous.
Anne Not as long as you are right. As long as you don't make mistakes, there is no limit to how sure of yourself you may be.
Jane But look. There he comes. (enter Henry and Buckingham)
Anne Is he with Norfolk?
Jane No, it is Buckingham.
Anne I thought Buckingham had left the stage. Wasn't there a disagreement between them? Is he not against the king's wars?

Jane Yes, he is, and that is what they always have been quarrelling about and still are.

Henry (with Buckingham) I do not believe you.

Buckingham But I speak the truth, which you must face or regret it.

Henry Charles turning his back on me? Never! He would not dare. He forgets that I am married to his aunt! God curse his blood if he lets me down! The French king was quite enough for a treacherous jackal!

Buckingham I beg your majesty to cease making further campaigns of war, for the sake of England.

Henry Away, dog! You are no better than the emperor Charles, who is worse than a dog! Away, I say! I will chop off your head one day!

Buckingham War is futile and meaningless. You will gain nothing from it, I promise your majesty, except losses, losses and more losses, which is the only sum and gain for anyone of any war.

Henry I know, I know, I know. You have said those very words a hundred times before. You keep repeating your boring morals like a parrot. I know I have to stop making further wars now, but I can't withdraw and let the bloody scots and frogs with their slippery slimery win the field, can I? I'll have to ride the storm or allow defeat to dishonour me. Therefore I must not stop fighting yet. It's a matter of saving faces. Can't you see? I can't let the frogs and scots make a fool of me, can I? If I pull out now, the emperor Charlie will call me ridiculous. It just isn't done. Fare thee well, Buckingham! Preach to those bigoted frogs and fanatical scotsmen! They are all for bigotry and fanaticism! The French royal family has it in their blood! All France is bloody poison!

Buckingham Good bye, your majesty, but mark my words!

Henry No risk. I know them by heart for all their worthlessness. (*exit Buckingham*)

(*aside*) My wars are coming to nothing. I thought I would at least gain something by them, but all my hopes have been of no avail, and all my financiers are wringing their hands in despair as if being tortured by my bad business. It seems that fights with weapons are of less consequence than, for instance, fights with ideas. Charles has lost more in his battle with Martin Luther than with the devil François of the frogs of France. I think a battle with the Pope might be more refreshing and produce better results. After all, my wife is barren, produces no fruit after her one failure, and I must have an heir. Barren fields are to be sold, and therefore I'll sell her to the Pope for nothing. It will be a hard fight, but I will win it, since I simply must. (*discovers the two ladies*) But what are those two gentle ladies over there discussing? I will steal their words and listen in silence. (*unnoticed by them, he overhears their conversation*)

Jane Do you like Buckingham?

Anne No, he is not handsome enough, and too ambitious in power greed for his own good.

Jane Do you like Norfolk?

Anne No, he is an old buffoon.

Jane How about Suffolk, then?

Anne He is such a disgusting fop. (*notices the King but makes no sign thereof.*)

Jane Whom do you like then?

Anne Only the King.

Jane The King?

Anne Certainly. He is the only real man in England.

Jane He would cut your head off if he heard you.

Anne I doubt it. He is too kind for such deeds. After all, he is a loving man and has no desire to harm an innocent lady.

Henry (*joining them*) Who wouldn't harm an innocent lady?

Anne Why, you, Sire.
Henry Why are you so positive?
Anne Wicked kings exist only in fairy tales.
Henry What proof have you of my lack of any wickedness?
Anne Your crown, my lord.
Henry You are bold, my dear. What is your name?
Anne Anne Boleyn.
Henry And who is your blushing friend?
Anne Jane Seymour.
Henry Tell her she need not fear me.
Anne Jane, the King asks me to tell you that you need not fear him. (*Jane blushes even more.*)
Henry I sincerely believe she is more of a tomato than a soft-skinned apricot.
Anne If she be a tomato, I am a vine of grapes. Each part of me tastes different, and there are hundreds.
Henry You have a very likeable tongue, sweet lady. I need someone to talk to occasionally, not just for sport in bed but for intellectual sport, and that Spanish cow of a mother of my one child, that worthless daughter, is only good for talk in prayers. (*Jane rises.*) But wither, lady Jane?
Jane Excuse me, please, Sir. (*exit in haste*)
Henry Did she not like our tastes?
Anne I know not. But I think I am capable of taking a liking to yours.
Henry Your words smell of danger, but danger amuses me. I have some business now to attend to, but wait for me in the future.
Anne I will, your majesty, with the utmost devotion.
Henry Ha-ha! I believe there is a worm in you. I hope your tongue is not cloven.
Anne I have only one tongue, your majesty, which I promise to never point at you.
Henry Ha-ha! Farewell, good lizard. Serve me at dinner. You will do well as an appetizer.
Anne (aside) I hope to become more than that.
Henry What?
Anne Nothing.
Henry Good afternoon, then.
Anne Good afternoon. (*exit Henry*)

By Jove, I like that man. And I promise and swear, that before Catherine has born him any other children, I will bear him two. It is an oath, and like all my guesses and prophecies I do believe it will come true. Let's hope and see. I was never wrong yet, the King already treats me better than his Queen, so it could only end up one way and no other. Oh, how exciting it is to be in love with a King! (*exit*)

Scene 2. The King's chamber.

(*Henry sits in a chair, brooding. Then enter Queen Catherine.*)

Henry (confounded) What are you doing here?
Catherine Oh, my King, I have not seen you for so many days. I had to break this terrible unbearable state of ignorance and confusion of mine. My king, what have I done?
Henry Get away, Kate.
Catherine But what have I done? What is my crime against you? Why do you no longer treat me with the respect, honour and courtesy which is due the Queen of England? (*She falls on her knees.*) Henry, beloved husband, do not keep me out of your sight. O pray, let me return to your heart, let me once more entertain you as I

used to, let us once more go down and dance together in the hall. Oh Henry, what has turned you away from me? Have I grown so odious?

Henry Away, Cath. I can not enjoy your presence here, and neither will you be able to enjoy mine. But believe me, Cath: I hold nothing against you. You imagine things, what you see in our relationship is not reality. It is your own extraneous mind. So leave me now, Kate. You disturb my thoughts.

Catherine If I disturb you, then I am a disturbance. You say yourself that I disturb you. Is that not then a fact of reality? Or did I just hear those words in my mind: You disturb me?

Henry Catherine, I am not fit to argue about petty things now. Leave me, and please try not to intrude in my private chambers at this hour of the night in the future. This time of the day, Kate, is the only one in which I feel at ease and inclined to contemplate matters objectively. This hour of the day is the only one in which I enjoy the realm of philosophy. So leave me now, Kate, please.

Catherine (rising) There was a time when you pestered me the whole subsequent day with questions of why I had not been with you in this very chamber at this very sensual hour of the night.

Henry Leave me, Kate!

Catherine And there was a time when...

Henry I said leave me!

Catherine ...my appearance least of all disturbed you, and especially not at this hour of the night.

Henry Enough, Kate!

Catherine I haven't seen you for eight days, and when at last I break my tragic isolation all you do is to reduce me to silence.

Henry (rising in anger) I have had enough of you, Kate. Out, out, out! Out, I say! *(forces her towards the door)* Bitch! Out! Disturbing bitch! What a nuisance you are! Get out of here! I have seen enough of you for a fortnight! Out, I say!

Catherine (desperate) But Henry...

Henry Out! Out! Out! Out! Out! *(He forces her out of the room and bangs the door behind her. She is heard crying on the other side.)* Snivelling drivelling old cow! I will not listen to your self-pity. If that is all you ladies are good for, turning into boring cry-babies going down the drain of self-pity, you must do that alone. I will not listen to your words any more. I have had enough of you! Old catholic bitch!

Catherine (from behind the door) But I am your Queen!

Henry You are nothing but a failure of a mother. You are an old barren cow.

Catherine But I offered you a daughter!

Henry That was your mistake, when I wanted a son. What's the use of a daughter? What's the use of more barren cows? What's the use of more spinster cry-babies good for nothing but self-pity, refusing to co-operate to make sons? *(Catherine weeps desperately outside.)* Away, cow! I have had enough of you and your dreadfully awkward self-pity! Away, I say! Or I will send you back to Spain! *(Catherine suddenly stops weeping. Both are silent. Henry tries to listen but hears nothing from her.)*

Catherine (opening the door, crawling still on the floor, whispering wheezingly:) You wouldn't dare!

Henry (rushing up, forcing her out and locking the door) I would! And I will do it! I'll send you along with one of those Spanish captains who couldn't find his way to India and ended up in America! You are a lost cause, Catherine! There is nothing for you in my life any more! At best you produced a lot of still-born children! I'll divorce you! *(Trying to listen, he hears her no more. She has apparently left.) (under his voice:)* The old barren cow!

Scene 3. The court.

(enter King, Buckingham, Norfolk, Suffolk, lords, courtiers, and ladies, amongst whom is seen Lady Anne Boleyn. The Queen is absent. Pomp and flourish.)

Henry Has the King of France agreed to peace?

Buckingham It was he that proposed it, your Majesty.

Henry Was it? I don't seem to remember. Nevertheless, is the peace settled, then?

Buckingham, Norfolk, Suffolk *(together)* Aye, your Majesty.

Henry Good. At last the English peace will be introduced on the stage of life and set an example to stormy barbaric Europe. All we ever wanted was peace and prosperity, wasn't it, Buckingham?

Buckingham If you say so, your Majesty.

Henry As you see, I do say so, if you can hear and mark my words. Now, what is the programme for today? Bartholomew, old fool, have you constructed the programme according to my instructions?

Bartholomew I have indeed, your Majesty.

Henry And did you take a careful note of all my instructions?

Bartholomew Most carefully, your majesty.

Henry Then let's hear the result of the labour of our ample minds. Shout it out, Bartholomew!

Bartholomew *(reads)* Item One: A sitting for the painter.

Henry What painter?

Bartholomew The German painter.

Henry What's his name?

Bartholomew Hans Holybine.

Henry I had completely forgotten that. Are you sure you didn't construe that for yourself?

Bartholomew Quite sure, your Majesty.

Henry Well, I'll never forget that what's his name again?

Bartholomew *(reads)* Hans Holbine.

Henry Are you sure it's the same person?

Bartholomew It certainly is written here, though I admit rather unintelligibly.

Henry That's the problem with foreign names. They can't spell them, so you can't remember them. Well then, continue.

Bartholomew Item Two: A ball.

Henry Excellent.

Bartholomew Item Three: A banquet.

Henry A banquet? Is there nothing more to it?

Bartholomew Doesn't a banquet include just about everything? What is there more to a banquet than just a banquet?

Henry Add immediately twenty musicians, a few clowns and jugglers, and some other kind of entertainment. A good banquet can never have enough. And what follows after the banquet?

Bartholomew Item Four: Affairs of state.

Henry Oh, we could do without that.

Bartholomew An interview with Sir Thomas More marked by your Majesty as very important is included among the affairs of today, your Majesty.

Henry That wise old bore! Well, it seems I'll have to worry about the country somewhat today. Next item, Bartholomew.

Bartholomew Item Five: A ball.

Henry Good.

Bartholomew Item Six: A small repast.

Henry Good.

Bartholomew Item Seven: A royal nap.

Henry Did I put it in those words, scribbler?

Bartholomew I don't remember, your Majesty.

Henry Change it immediately to "a well-deserved beauty-sleep for everyone that may care".

Bartholomew Very well, your majesty.

Henry So we'll have a busy time today working hard between all those necessary repasts so well needed after some banquets and balls. We constantly need a refill for our common appetite. But who is coming here? Are we to be honoured by noble guests from the Continent?

Suffolk It seems like it.

Henry Where are they from?

Norfolk I take it to be the Dutchman Erasmus Rotterdamus with some noble continental friends. Our friend Sir Thomas More is apparently going to introduce them to us.

Sir Thomas More Most sovereign, great and glorious lord of our country, may I humbly present and introduce unto you the most priceless services and beneficial friendship of the finest man who walks on the Continent today?

Henry Prithee, proceed, Sir Thomas.

Sir Thomas More Erasmus, step forth! (*Erasmus comes up.*) This, worthy King Henry of England, is the almost equally worthy, though more humble, sage and European teacher of wisdom, Erasmus Rotterdamus. Never a more honourable man wrote a book, if we except only the unknown author of the Bible. I wish, Your Majesty, that thou wilt treat this man as your equal, for he is more than your equal, his mind being a treasure incomparable to all the treasures of the Pope. Will you honour him, great and noble liege of mine and England's?

Henry Indeed I will, Sir Thomas, and I thank thee for having introduced him so well. Come forth, Erasmus, and I promise thee thou shalt know the entire leadership of England before this day is ended.

Erasmus I was never more honoured even in Germany. No king ever offered me his hand before, and no one ever boosted my desserts, which are none, more than worthy Sir Thomas, who honours me by calling me his friend.

Henry Come, noble Dutchman, you shall sup with me tonight and teach me all about the latest European wisdom. And if it be thy wish, Sir Thomas shall keep us company.

Erasmus It is not only my wish but certainly yours as well.

Sir Thomas And it certainly is not only your mutual wish but my wish as well.

Henry Sir Thomas, one half of you has always shown a dangerous inclination towards impertinence. Pray do not show that half in public.

Sir Thomas My heart, my liege, will be half bound in irons forever.

Henry Good, Sir Thomas. Now, Bartholomew, after this most afflating arrival of a most inspiring guest of unequalled honour, tell me, what was the immediate point of our programme?

Bartholomew Item One. A sitting for the painter.

Henry Let the painter wait untill tomorrow. But, a thought strikes me, is not the painter German?

Bartholomew He is German indeed, your Majesty.

Henry (to Erasmus) Tell me, good honourable Dutchman and sage, dost thou know the German artist Holebine?

Erasmus The father or the son?

Henry The son.

Erasmus I know them both.

Henry Excellent! May I invite him to our supper tonight with Sir Thomas?

Erasmus I am certain, your Majesty, that it would embarrass neither him nor me.

Henry Excellent! And now, let me introduce you to the court. Or shall we have a ball first?

Suffolk Yes, your Majesty, indeed a ball, to enlighten ourselves and our genii likewise!

Henry Do you enjoy balls, Erasmus?

Erasmus As long as the dancers keep themselves steady on the floor.

Henry My dancers do, Erasmus. Come, everyone! To the ball-room! I promise to introduce our guest of honour to everyone there. Come, Erasmus, and I will even introduce you to my Queen. (*to Anne Boleyn*) You shall teach our noble humanist to dance.

Erasmus She need not, your Majesty. I know the art already and do no longer practise it.

Henry What a pity! Then I'll dance with you instead, my sweet!
(*leads the way out with Anne. Everyone goes into the next room.*
Only Sir Thomas and Erasmus remain behind.)

Erasmus (*aside*) What a singular king this is!

Sir Thomas Did I hear you say something?

Erasmus Yes, you heard me express my wonder at your king, if you heard anything.

Sir Thomas Yes, he is an extraneous king indeed. Did you mark his affection for the dark lady Anne?

Erasmus Is she a lady in waiting?

Sir Thomas She is. Anything might come of that developing knot.

Erasmus I have not seen the Queen by the King's side. Is she indisposed?

Sir Thomas No one knows.

Erasmus Remarkable.

Sir Thomas Yes.

Erasmus I suppose you shouldn't jump to conclusions.

Sir Thomas One of those cases of 'the less said, the better'.

Erasmus The King seems to me somewhat over-passionate.

Sir Thomas That's exactly his problem. He can't contain himself. He has too much physical power, and he is not suffering from any exaggerated self-control. The risk is, that it will get worse with the years.

Erasmus If you can't control yourself as a young man, you'll never learn to do it.

Sir Thomas Exactly.

Erasmus The diplomats of England will have a hard time guiding such an ungovernable vessel.

Sir Thomas They have it already, and he is gathering storms.

Erasmus So the best thing seems to be to stick to 'the less said the better', but I don't envy your chancellorship. I think you are already in rather an awkward position. I am at least free and independent. But I had better not lag too far behind. Wilt thou follow me?

Sir Thomas Proceed thee; I will come in a while. (*exit Erasmus*)

Yes, he is a remarkable king indeed, whose caprice and passion might well shake every block of wit. His Queen is miserably forsaken; what European earthquakes will she with her powers bestir for vengeance? A small insignificant protestantic rat is flirted with in front of all gossipers including the Holy Pope. If this Henry takes into his head to replace his Queen with this slut, what wars, curses and damnations will Europe, Spain and the Pope lash poor England with? This Henry casts his dice with fate and does not care even if he loses everything. The only thing he does care about is his enjoyment. As long as Henry laughs, the world which Henry lives in is superb, whether it perishes or not. Is such a King tolerable? Is he

worth the faith, respect and support of his nation? I know not. The future will answer the question. But until then one thing is certain: he is the only king we have.

So, out of my broodings and dark forebodings into the gay enlightened lascivious ball-room. Farewell, seriousness and conscience, for the rest of the day and the coming night.

Scene 4. Henry eating alone with Anne Boleyn.

Henry You never danced better than tonight, my sweet.

Anne Neither did you, little man.

Henry You flatter me, Anne. I love it when you flatter me.

Anne I also love flattering you. And do you know why?

Henry No?

Anne Because you love it when I flatter you!

(They laugh heartily together.)

Henry Anne, I must marry you.

Anne But I thought you were married already.

Henry I am, but I will get rid of her.

Anne Here, have some wine. I don't like it when you speak of your grievous spouse. You become grievous when you speak of grievous things, and grievous things are grieving. I don't like being grieved.

Henry You are right, my sweet, pretty, dark little Anne! Let's drink instead of speaking of my haggish spouse!

(Catherine has entered and stands listening to them out of their sight.)

Catherine (aside) This is the first time in three days I leave my room to cease the flow of my tears and comfort myself by the company of people. This is the first time in three weeks I see my King, and the first time in three months his mouth convinces me that I still exist in his mind. It is a heavenly and blissful comfort indeed to hear that I am haggish, for even in the role of the worst and ugliest of hags it is more comfortable to be than in no part at all. But in the end that final part awaits us all.
(exit)

Henry I thought I heard her voice.

Anne (who is now sitting on his knee) Whose voice?

Henry My married lady's.

Anne You probably heard a ghost.

Henry Or perhaps it was just a miaowing cat.

Anne Or perhaps nothing at all.

Henry Let's drink to that, Anne, to nothing at all!

Anne To nothing at all!

(They drink and laugh.)

Aren't we happy as it is, Henry? Do you have to do away with her? Can't you keep her as your wife and me as your favourite mistress? Everybody knows you have had any amounts of girls and mistresses before including my sister. Your Queen did not object, and she had no difficulty remaining your Queen and keeping her face.

Henry You don't understand, Anne. She can't give me sons. I have to have a son, at any cost! It's my family or nothing! Without my son I am nothing! I want you married to me before you give me my son!

Anne And what about objections from your government, Sir Thomas More, the Church, the Pope and all the world?

Henry Damn them all! I love you! That's the only thing that counts! And you must give me a son! As my legally wedded wife, so that there can be no doubt about

the legitimacy! I've had bastards before, and sons even, but I must have a legal one! Catherine has failed completely and, alas, proved quite worthless. There's nothing more to it. I simply have to scrap her.

Anne It's your decision. All I can do is to oblige you.

Henry You are intelligent, Anne, I can talk with you, you understand human nature and aren't locked up in superstition and bigotry, you are not ridiculously pious, you have everything I miss in my marriage, so I simply must have you! Is that clear?

Anne It couldn't very well be much clearer.

Henry All right, then. It's final. I'll never give you up, whatever the world and church and all the rotten establishments of this crazy existence might say!

Scene 5.

Enter Sir Thomas More, brooding.

Sir Thomas More He has done it! Finally he has done it! He plucked a peacock and feathered a crow. And what a splendid crow she is now, and how abject the peacock is! Will the crow keep her feathers or be plucked like the martyred bird before her? Will a second queen, who really isn't a queen, satisfy a King who was not satisfied with a Queen? Probably she will not. A crow is no good substitute for a lost swan. He will soon tire of the crow and find a finch. When the finch is consumed he will perhaps find what he deserves: a shrew, a termagant, a harpy. But that we should not hope for: you will die before you see Paradise. Here he comes now, the robustious King and his lass.

(enter Henry VIII with Anne Boleyn.)

Henry Heigh ho, Thomas More! How do you today?

More Better than yesterday, most noble king. Thank you for the question.

Henry What question?

More You asked me how I was.

Henry You shouldn't thank the King for being friendly. Then he might cease to be friendly.

More When a King ceases to be friendly he ceases to be King.

Henry You speak like an insolent Republican. Don't tell me you take your own utopias seriously.

More What I have written I have written, and with that I stand.

Henry My dear Sir, you are an excellent chancellor. Pray stay that way. This realm has never seen any better one, although you are the very first chancellor of ours without peerage. Keep your excellence and stay away from communism.

More My utopias are nought but common sense, which unfortunately to some degree is lacking in this world.

Henry Perhaps you are right, but your utopias are boring! If your bloodless common sense was to rule the world, there would be no excitement left in it. You have no sense of the human drama. For that reason only I refuse to tolerate your dry utopias. Your ambition is to abolish all dramatic forms of life, but that would finish life itself.

More Against common sense you stake your common woman.

Henry Shut up your insolent mouth, Sir Thomas More! I shall never cease to be friendly with you whatever you say.

More So you say today. What did you say to your previous Queen yesterday?

Henry My queens are no concern of yours since they have nothing to do with your chancellorship.

More My chancellorship is ever loyal to you.

Henry Yes, but your ideas attack me from behind!

More Only as arguments, not as weapons. We were always able and open enough to argue about anything.

Henry Then don't involve my queens!

More My chancellorship includes some national responsibility and conscience.

Henry Oh, be gone, Sir Thomas, before you bore me! Isn't he a scoundrel, Anne?

Anne Yes, but invaluable as such and for England, and a good scoundrel that pleases me.

Henry As long as he is a pleasure to thee he shall be a pleasure to me. Heigh ho, Thomas More, you are more to me than just a Thomas More! Now to dinner! See you at council later on, Sir Thomas! (*exit with Anne*)

More What a king this is! England will see none more like him. He is a lion without claws, a big thick-headed thick-thighed fool with a crown on his head. He is an elephant on the throne of this realm, quite incompetent and silly, but rather entertaining and fun to look at in spite of his big size and clumsiness.

And what a companion he has found to share his groaning seat! I did not know elephants associated with such lust with black panthers! And ambitious she is already; it is quite clear already how much she adores the king and how little she honours Henry. In ten days she will be crowned, in ten days one of the simplest sluts of England will be made the same country's leading lady. Alas, where are we going? To what end will the caprices of this absurd hog and hag lead us, poor confused oftentimes confounded baaing Englishmen? We baa in desperation; our fathers fought our fathers to let this Henry dissolve our Church, plunder our divine treasures of the monasteries, where wisdom, art and history have been assembled since William the First destroyed the history and tradition we had before that. Our fathers hanged each other and chopped off each other's heads to let the future see this Henry on the throne, who now chops off the heads of our bishops and holiest men, our Queen perhaps and probably soon ourselves. Alas! where are we going? My only comfort nowadays is that I am a utopian; having utopias to flee to is better than having reality to attend to, reality being well on its way towards becoming such a haze and craze that in pure godlessness it soon will prove by its own evidence that God who made it must be as rotten in his soul as all those popes and emperors who shamelessly dare govern in the holiest of religious names. (*enter Cromwell*) Yes, Cromwell, the world is growing into a regular bedlam, and that must prove where God is heading, if he still exists, which wise men find it ever more a subject most debatable and doubtful in the name of common sense and thought.

Cromwell Do you doubt in Him?

More Of course not, but I can understand why the most sensible people do.

Cromwell Then you are on a most doubtful course. You must be over-strained. You fail to command rightly your senses. By the way, the King demands your acceptance of his supremacy and your rejection of the papal authority over the Church of England.

More Has it gone thus far?

Cromwell It is inevitable. He must divorce Catherine. The Pope refuses to accept his divorce, so he has to divorce the Pope as well. He will be his own Pope instead, and his church and people must accept it.

More Some people will not.

Cromwell They will end in absolute intimacy with the Tower and the executioner.

More Without trial?

Cromwell No, but the King's justice will be the only justice.

More So we must worship the King rather than our God?

Cromwell We will have no choice.

More There is always a choice of conscience.

Cromwell No conscience will be permitted except the King's Law.

More In that case the world is beyond repair in its craze.
Cromwell It may be so, but we must survive.
More Silently survive the liquidation of Queen Catherine to watch the rise of Anne Boleyn as a slave to her cult?
Cromwell Necessity compels us.
More Not me. I will never succumb to blackmail by force or by any method.
Cromwell Your personal choice is free but risky.
More Thanks for at least granting me a personal choice. (*exit*)
Cromwell His end is near. He is too honest to suit a self-willed monarch. Someone ought to warn him of the fact that he is quite alone in this new state of absolute monarchical power. I am too opportunistic to become that warner. May he fail if he will not subordinate. I will not risk my life by hesitating to obey this modern kingly fashion. Saints and martyrs are now obsolete, and soon we will not even bother any more to keep such weakness in remembrance.

Scene 6. Anne in her chamber with her maid.

Anne Love has conquered all, and to the love of me and Henry not even the Church of Rome will hold her stand! I am Queen now. God save the Queen! O Henry, how happy you have made me this eve! How fresh is the air which I now may breathe, how free is my soul tonight, and what a delightful thing is power! Henrietta, did you send my note to the Princess Dowager?
Henrietta Yes, your highness.
Anne Did she not deign to send a reply?
Henrietta I did not see her, madame. A girl received the message and promised to deliver it. The Aragonian sees no one any more.
Anne Ha-ha! It serves her right! The old cat!
Henrietta She was a Queen once, my lady.
Anne And I am your Queen now, Henrietta, and not just your lady! Leave my room, feeble creature! (*exit Henrietta*) Ha! It is good to be Queen! Henry I hold between my two tiniest fingers, an expanding realm between two others, and the son in my womb will ensure and increase the glory of my future. Ha! What a dame am I, what an intoxicating star, what a royal divinity I have grown, in just a few weeks! O life, how I do adore thee! Catherine of Aragon, how I do despise thee! How could you permit yourself to abandon and awake yourself from the dream of being the once and future Queen of England!

Act III, Scene 1.

(*enter Sir Thomas More*)

More Once there was a man called Wolsey. He was an archbishop and a worthy one too. What happened to him? The King bereft him of all his merits and deserts. The King bereft him of everything, because he was a most worthy and holy man. Unworthy and unholy men can not stand men holy and worthy, and the King, being more unworthy and unholy than most, mercilessly hamstringed him.

Once there was a Queen called Catherine. She was the daughter of a royal house older than the King of England's. She was the Queen of England who graced England more than the Queen of England. She loved none more than her husband. She was dutiful and did her perfect best both as Queen and wife to a preposterous husband. She gave him a daughter, she was virtuous, she was honest, and she did not lack in anything. What happened to her? The King one day decided to never see her again. The King one day said she was no longer the Queen of England. The King

tired of her, forsook her, imprisoned her and ejaculated her. She died in misery, starved to death in loneliness, eaten up by the hatred of her husband, consumed by the evil malice, shameful abuse and absurd rumours liberally spread over Europe by her King. She died because the King willed it so, and yet she died faithful to him and a most impeccable Queen.

Once there was an organized Church, a stable religion, an unwavering ground for the people of England to stand firm on, cling to and have faith in. The King hanged or burned the leaders of that Church. The King emptied the treasures and reduced the traditions of that Church, which were eight centuries old, to nothing. The King brought chaos to the Church of England, and to England, because what is England without something to believe in? The King has dissolved a religion, murdered more saints and innocent men than the enemy of his virtuous father, and made this ancient peaceful country a hubbub, a boiling cauldron of brewing rebellion and increasing barbarity. The King has made himself, his people and his country an enemy to the world, a shameful blemish on the surface of the earth, a horrible detestable chaotic nauseating hotchpotch of a mess! And why has he done so? Because he loved a lass called Anne, a black silly girl from some Celtic cottage, desired her and wanted to marry her. Indeed, he did marry her, but in order to marry her he first did all these things which I have already complained of, - turned our world upside down. Is such a king really a king, or is destiny making fun of us? After all, ladies and gentlemen, you have to admit that he looks more like a pranking and prancing fool to us than a king. But here he comes now. Take heed!

Henry But have you tried everything?

Bartholomew Everything, my liege.

Henry What has made her so hopelessly irreparably angry?

Bartholomew I do not know, my liege.

More (aside) Is the second wife becoming a problem?

Henry What exactly did she say?

Bartholomew Nothing much, my liege. She screamed and threw things at me.

Henry What did she scream?

Bartholomew "Away, dog," and "Hang yourself."

Henry But what on earth has made her so furious so suddenly? What is the matter with her?

Bartholomew If only I knew, your Majesty.

Henry If only I knew, Bartholomew!

More Is there anything I can serve my beloved King with?

Henry Nothing at the moment, Sir Thomas. Bartholomew, I hereby charge you with the task of finding out what vexes the Queen.

Bartholomew I shall do my best, Sir.

Henry You shall do your best and find it out! If you do not return to me with the secret of the Queen's anger in your possession, I shall never speak to you again! Hence!

Bartholomew Adieu, my liege. (*exit*)

Henry Sir Thomas!

More Yes.

Henry I am tired of your company! Leave me!

More Do you not dare dispute with me any more?

Henry Since you ask for it: what is it you are holding against me?

More Nothing, Sire.

Henry Nothing, hypocrite? I thought only good of you until now you became a hypocrite.

More Since you ask for it, Sire, you have during the years become slightly immoral.

Henry Immoral? Me? On the contrary! I have smothered all the immorality of the Church! I have crushed papal monopoly on superstition! I have turned England into a rational realm of your very own common sense! I am democratic like no king before me in English history!

More I was merely referring to Mistress Anne Boleyn.

Henry So that is still your eternal infernal hobby-horse! You persist in insulting the Queen!

More You asked for it, my liege. My honesty is ever loyal to my King.

Henry A wedded man and woman is one flesh and blood! Impertinence to my lawful wedded wife is impertinence to me, the King!

More So I beg your pardon for the persistence of my honest impertinence.

Henry You must relent!

More My honesty is my only conscience, I am afraid, Sir.

Henry Then you disdain the King's laws!

More I do not, Sire. I only disdain the King's human weakness.

Henry Enough! Leave!

More Very well, your most high and venerable Majesty! *(exit)*

Henry He is too individual, that man. I like him not. I like that rogue Cromwell better. He is so shrewd. And Cromwell agrees with me, while I never know whether Thomas shares my views or not. He thinks too much. He is too immersed in the realm of wisdom. I am afraid of him. He seems to look upon me from above rather than from the point of view of a subject. I do not like feeling small. Horace! *(enter Horace)*

Horace Yes, Sir!

Henry Spy on Sir Thomas More!

Horace Yes, Sir! *(exit)(enter again after some while)*

Now or forever, Sir?

Henry Now and forever! Report to me directly! Out with you!

Horace Yes, Sir! *(exit)*

Henry Horace is a reliable chap. I like him better than all those horrid servants who bow and cajole me like a school of bullied frightened children. I would rather be a Horace than a Bartholomew. Bartholomew!

Bartholomew *(entering)* Yes, my liege.

Henry Have you found out the Queen's secret yet?

Bartholomew Not as yet, your majesty.

Henry You are incompetent!

Bartholomew My liege, I am doing my best!

Henry That makes you the more incompetent! A man who does his best succeeds whatever his labour may be!

Bartholomew But, my liege, you sent me away but half an hour ago!

Henry Do not argue with me! You are incompetent! Away, continue your business!

Bartholomew Yes, your majesty. *(exit)*

Horace *(aside)* Half an hour ago? I thought it was merely five minutes ago!

Henry Horace!

Horace Yes, my liege!

Henry Shouldn't you be spying on Sir Thomas More?

Horace Yes, my lord, and I was, until you called me in.

Henry You are lying!

Horace No, my liege, I am not.

Henry Did I not hear your voice just now behind the tapestry?

Horace Yes, Sire, you did, because there I stood spying on Sir Thomas More.

Henry (*calling*) Sir Thomas More! (*a pause*) He doesn't hear us. He isn't in the vicinity. You are a great but sympathetic liar, Horace! Away! To your business!

Horace Yes, your majesty. (*exit*)

Henry And now to dinner. Oh Anne, what's the matter with our marriage? Why are you angry with me? Is it because I dined last night with Jane Seymour? But she is a harmless little dove, dear Anne, a harmless little dove indeed. She would never be angry with me like you. No, she is harmless, lovable and without anything of that which makes too many women monsters. No, she is a harmless little dove. Bartholomew will find out for me whether you really are jealous or not. I hope you are not. I hope you are ignorant of my dinners with the gentle dove Jane Seymour, and that you are angry with me merely for some trifle. Perhaps I have forgotten your birthday, for instance? Or perhaps I have forgotten your existence for a day or two? Surely I hope it's for the sake of some trifle my Queen is mad at me. It wouldn't, after all, be nice if she knew that all day long I can think of nought but the sweet little virgin Jane Seymour. (*exit*)

Scen 2. The Court.

(*Suffolk, Norfolk, Cromwell, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, Buckingham, and others*)

Suffolk No one knows whether it's a boy or not.

Norfolk I think it's a boy.

Cromwell I think it's a daughter.

Archbishop Cranmer I hope, for the Queen's sake, it's a boy, a son, an heir.

Cromwell (*aside*) I hope, for my sake, it's another worthless princess.

Norfolk They are coming! Soon we will know.

Cromwell (*aside*) For if the Queen's child is a princess, then the Queen is lost as no better than the last one. And then I will be able to choose for the King another.

Suffolk Here they come! Bow, Sirs, kneel!

(*enter lords and gentlemen with Sir Thomas More*)

Norfolk I do not see the King.

Sir Thomas More Rejoice, o England! Yet another princess has been born by yet another Queen and only three months after this queen's marriage!

Cranmer A princess?

Suffolk Another princess?

Buckingham (*aside*) Another fiasco.

Cromwell (*aside*) Oh, what a day is this! How the lark of my heart sings and hovers!

Sir Thomas More Yes, my lords, another glorious princess!

Cranmer And her name?

Suffolk Not Anne or Ruth, I hope?

Norfolk Not Henrietta or Godiva, I should think?

Sir Thomas Her name is Elizabeth.

Suffolk A good name for a princess.

Norfolk A name better for a princess than for a boy.

Cromwell What would the boy's name have been, had there been a boy?

Cranmer Edward, the King once told me.

Cromwell (*aside*) God be praised for withholding king Edward the Sixth!

Buckingham Well, that's that. Another princess.

Suffolk What says the King on the birth of his daughter?

Sir Thomas Nothing.

Cranmer Surely he has some fatherly feelings in his heart?

Sir Thomas If he has, he doesn't bother to express them.

Buckingham What a father!

Suffolk Well, there seems to be nothing more to it.

Norfolk Let's leave these pompous halls, Suffolk, of ever increasing numbers of failed women! Let's go to Richmond.

Buckingham Yes, there is nothing more to attend to here. May I join you? Some beverage would do me some good.

Cromwell Me too.

Suffolk You may not follow us, Cromwell.

Cromwell Why not?

Norfolk Because you are stupid. Come, my lords. (*exit Norfolk, Suffolk, Buckingham*)

Cromwell So I am stupid, indeed! They do not know me. I am much cleverer than they think. One day they will fear me. What they call my stupidity is the very thing which will elevate me to the King's society. I will be the most powerful man in England one day, next to the King, because they think I am stupid.

Cranmer Are you happy on the occasion of this kingly daughter's birth, Cromwell?

Cromwell Indeed I am! Are you?

Cranmer Certainly. (*aside*) Happier than you, it seems.

Is the Queen happy, Sir Thomas, for her princess' birth?

Sir Thomas She would have been more delighted had she been a prince.

Cranmer Hem. Yes. That is understandable. Well, farewell for the evening, my lords.

Sir Thomas Good buy to you, worthy Thomas Cranmer. (*aside*) I love you despite your part in the wreck of the Church of England.

Cromwell I overheard those words, More!

More Did you indeed? How interesting!

Cromwell I shall report them to the King!

More Yes, I rather think you will. After all, you are the least trustworthy man in England. You strive for power and sacrifice anyone for that purpose. Is it not so?

Cromwell You are wrong, Lord Chancellor! All I want is the welfare of England.

More And it never fares well unless it fares in your direction, eh, Thomas Cromwell?

Cromwell It never fares well unless it fares in the King's direction.

More That is my opinion too. So why do you intend to destroy me, despite the fact that we agree so well?

Cromwell You are vicious, Sir Thomas More.

More So think only vicious men. Only vicious men, like you, believe that vicious men exist, Thomas Cromwell. Only vicious men know vicious men and sense vicious men in the air, because all they think of is themselves. – Commend me to the King, Cromwell, if you like. I don't care how you do it, because, for your information, my career is already finished, I have resigned most voluntarily from all my duties, so you need not fear me any more as a competitor, and the King will only be too glad to get rid of me and find more subjects' heads to chop off. God save you, Thomas Cromwell.

Cromwell And may God save you. (*exit Thomas More*) To the King now, with speed! How he will love to hear my news! How I will rise in his esteem! Anne Boleyn a failed queen, Thomas More an incurable papist traitor; trees fall all around me, soon I will be the only straight fir left. Oh, what a glorious future awaits me! What graces and merits lie waiting for me in the future! What a glorious thing is unknown, covert egoism!

Scene 3.

Anne Boleyn Good evening, Thomas Cromwell! How fares the King?

Cromwell I am just on my way to visit him.

Anne I have not seen him for some while. May I accompany you?

Cromwell Certainly you may. Come along! (*on his way out*) Oh dear! He is coming here! We don't have to cary ourselves to him; he carries his carrion to us first. (*enter*

Henry) Your majesty! (*kneels*)

Henry What's up, Thomas Cromwell? Anne Boleyn, what are you doing here?

Anne The same as you, my King: wondering what you are doing here.

Henry I am on my way into the garden. Please don't delay me.

Cromwell My King, I have some most important news to break to you first.

Henry And what is that most important news?

Cromwell My lord, Sir Thomas More is a traitor.

Henry I know.

Anne Sir Thomas More is not a traitor! If he is, then I am as well, and the Archbishop of Canterbury with me!

Henry You should beware of speaking such words, Anne. So what makes you think Sir Thomas More is a traitor?

Cromwell I heard him name Thomas Cranmer as the chief wrecker of the Church of England.

Henry Indeed? That was an odious thing to say indeed.

Anne (aside) Thomas Cromwell is his friend. An odious friend indeed he has proved himself to be. – My King, I believe Thomas Cromwell is lying.

Henry Don't meddle in my affairs, Anne! Sir Thomas More has long since been a burden to me. Have you anything more ta say against that most embarrassing man, Cromwell?

Cromwell Some months ago I heard him speak for himself not only against you and the Church, but against God Almighty.

Henry You mean to say that he goes so far as to sympathize with the extreme faction of humanists who claim that human reason makes the notion of God unnecessary?

Cromwell Yes. He has crossed all limits.

Anne All limits of what? Only of our own limitations of sense and wisdom! The man has grown to great for your limited tolerance, and so he irritates you both since he can nought but expand while you both are shrinking in that limitation of human qualities which follows the practice of power.

Henry Anne, you talk too much! The man is insane!

Anne (cautiously) Or a saint?

Henry What was that, Anne?

Anne Nothing.

Henry People who speak to themselves are dangerous.

Cromwell So does Sir Thomas More.

Henry Did you hear him?

Cromwell I heard, your majesty.

Henry Did he speak against me, his own beloved King?

Cromwell I heard him in a dark and secret corridor charge you with – nay, I can not quote it.

Henry Speak out, man, or your silence makes you a traitor!

Cromwell He charged you with...

Henry Come on, you exasperating fool!

Cromwell The ruining of England and the murder of your previous wife.

Henry God's dirty stinking blood! Get out, you torturers and vile denouncer of the finest man in England! (*chases them out; they part in turbulence.*)

So am I then the murdering fool, who in his wretchedness brings about the ruin of England? Did I then destroy my previous lady only because I tired of her? He seems to be right. Sir Thomas More is my careful observer, and his observations are all too correct. He has stunned me by revealing himself to me as my conscience, just as I was the happiest man without it. Should he then be hearkened to and be left alone in his dangerous vivacity as an imposing disturbance in that dreadful capacity of rational honesty? Can the King afford to have a conscience? First of all a King to play his part must safeguard the necessity of his royal perfection. I must not bow to the weakness of any human factor. The King must silence his conscience, or I must give in to Sir Thomas More, a simple lawyer without any noble pedigree. Do I have any choice? For any man there is a choice, but not for any King. God has made me King, while Thomas More is a mere mortal subject. God's authority is more important to defend than the thoughts of a philosophical adventurer. The responsibility is mine, not his, and therefore he has irrevocably set his last scion. Not even madame Boleyn can save him now, however powerful she may be as my wife, since he now has condemned my matrimony for the murder of that dreadful Aragonian.

Scene 4. The study of Sir Thomas More at Chelsea.

More Everything is now in danger. Mistress Anne Boleyn will never become popular, and his majesty is looking more and more askance at her ambitions. French king Francis makes a merry war against the emperor, who makes a hard fight against Martin Luther, who is beating hard the papal church, which excommunicates our Church of England and cuts off our nation from the world. And England is locked up in civil strife with her panjandrum Henry, who enforces surreptitiously a new identity on this our nation. Will it be a better thing than our historically purged and old through many tribulations well consolidated one? I disbelieve it.

Once he was a young man and as such the bravest and most sporting of all worldly princes. What went wrong with him? He made one great political mistake. He dared deny that royal matrimony was exclusively political and claimed instead that marriage was only a matter of love even for monarchs. How could he be so banal? A true king must only deal with love from duty. Love for love's sake in his case can only possibly result in wasted love in several unsatisfying matrimonyes.

Number two is falling out already. Will I stay alive to see his second marriage end in worse disaster than his first? I doubt it, since he never tolerated my refusal to accept his self-imposed supremacy of our English church. Since when have worldly princes greater church authority than those who serve religion only? Just in pagan Rome was such presumption possible, where loose degenerated Caesars ran their universal order into hell since they were gods. I see the present parallel and therefore wait for Nero's lackeys to in any moment come and get me. If I'm lucky they will grant me a defence in lawful action, but in such a lawsuit I will be condemned before it has commenced, since God no more is King in this our England, which instead is governed by this Nero, who has more authority than God.

O life, what a bird thou art, flying high in the air, diving deep into the ocean for fish, resting on the sea's surface, and always chased, chased, chased, by hunters, hawks, human monsters, creatures and butchers to transform thee into a dead thing. What a white miracle thou art, what a splendid divine conception it was of God to make you, how sweet, tragic and entertaining thou art, until death, your eternal foe

and huntsman, who never gives you one moment of peace, finally succeeds in catching you up and, in a preposterous moment's flash, reduces you to nil, to dust and dirt and disgusting dreadful dregs. What an absurd creature you are, Death, what a fool, what a ridiculous shadow, to follow life thus, to pester life thus and make of the divine white virgin a repast to your gluttonous self. What a laughable, absurd, crazy, unbelievable, absolutely incredibly foolish thing thou art, to be so cruel and ugly a companion to sweet glorious life. I laugh at thee, death, and consider thee a most ludicrously absurd fool although you in actual life are taken most seriously. As life's contrary you are solely a lie, for only life's alive as truth and beauty. If there ever was a dead thing, that thing was just death itself, which only keeps existing as phenomenon since it continues ever just to die. The greatest darkness is forever powerless against the least and tiniest of lights – but who is coming here? The hour then is come. What can I do for you, well armed soldiers?

First guard (entering) My lord, we are sorry, but you have to bid farewell to your wife and daughters and follow us to the Tower.

More Is it the last time I may enjoy my lovely home?

Second guard We can't answer that.

First guard The possibility exists. Eventually you might be allowed visitors to your prison.

More Not that I need that privilege, for I will never be alone. He who knoweth man can never be deserted even if the entire world abandons him. I am completely at your disposal. No one is at home now except me. I think that providence has chosen for us this well suited moment. Let us leave. I did expect you, so I don't think we have anything more here now to expect.

(rises. They leave. Curtain.)

Act IV Scene 1.

(The royal bed-chamber. The King and Queen in bed.)

Anne You murdered him!

Henry Murdered whom?

Anne Thomas More!

Henry Did I murder him?

Anne Who else?

Henry Those who cut his head off.

Anne But why did those who cut his head off cut his head off?

Henry They were probably ordered to do so.

Anne By whom?

Henry By their seniors.

Anne And who is the senior of all the seniors of this kingdom?

Henry I am.

Anne So you murdered him! Fie upon you! Fie!

Henry If you try to love your wife, they scold you. If you stop loving them they beg of you to love them. But how can you love them if they keep scolding you? A scolding wife is not lovable, every scolding wife should know. – Anne, don't scold me.

Anne I scold you as much as I please!

Henry Why? What's the purpose of doing so? I love you; why don't you love me in return?

Anne Thomas More was the finest and wisest man in England!

Henry Was it then in wisdom he denied you as queen and me as a king?

Anne He was just our critic. As such he was the only man in England to have a solid backbone and integrity.

Henry Listen, my dear. He was legally prosecuted and found guilty on only one point out of four. He was acquitted of all charges except the last one.

Anne So he was condemned only for denying your divinity and for preferring your humanity. You never were that wise, making yourself more divine than the Pope!

Henry You seem to have been quite infatuated with that chancellor.

Anne If it was your duty to have him executed, my duty is to extol his honour and celebrate the finest talent England has so far seen.

Henry Anne, no more of this nonsense. The fellow is dead. Let's sleep now.

Anne If you are not aware of the fact, the world knows I am married to a murderer.

Henry All queens are. That's nothing new. Be quiet, or I'll throw you out of bed!

Anne That my king would turn into such a ruthless killer of saints!

Henry Shut up now!

Anne Villain!

Henry (*angry*) Enough!

Anne (*with quiet alarm*) I was merely joking.

Henry That's no excuse! You have made me angry!

Anne But jokes aren't serious...

Henry Shut up, before you drive me mad!

Anne But you did murder Sir Thomas More.

Henry And so I'll murder you, unless you keep quiet!

Anne You'll never murder the Queen of England.

Henry I will if I must!

Anne You wouldn't dare!

Henry I've heard that one before. I certainly would, if you compelled me to it. Now, Anne, leave my room, before we begin to quarrel.

Anne I never quarrelled with you. You always quarrelled with me.

Henry Leave my room, Anne!

Anne I am the Queen of England!

Henry And so you shall be no more, unless you leave this room this instant!

Anne Henry, I do not recognize you.

Henry Leave my room, Anne, or I'll burn you like a witch! Leave me! Begone, tormenting woman! Or must I kick you out? Must I beat you out? Anne, get out!

Anne I will obey you, but I do dislike that you murdered Sir Thomas More.

Henry I did not murder him! He dug his own pit! He fell for that reason! He refused to cooperate! No one brought him to an end except himself! And he was my best friend! He broke his loyalty! He betrayed me! Leave me now, Anne, before I explode!

Anne It would be interesting to see you blow up into pieces. A funny sight it would be. But you won't explode, no matter how much puffed up you blow yourself up.

Henry Anne!

Anne Yes?

Henry Get out!

Anne I am going out.

Henry Quick!

Anne Yes, Sir. (*exit*)

Henry At last! What made that woman such a monster? Did I not love her? Do I not love her still? Why does she deliberately continue making herself such an excruciating nightmare? Who on earth did so inspire her with pride and spite? O Jane, how I wish that you were my wedded queen instead of this no longer bearable whore! Oh, Anne Boleyn, do I have to get rid of you? Do you have to disappoint me, mock me and colour my beard blue like another Catherine? Did you have to grow a wearisome, ever increasing torment? Why did it go like this? And I have no

one to advise me any more. Oh, Thomas More, why did you have to make yourself my enemy? We worked so well together, until your tolerance found a dead end of my liberty. Why couldn't you humour me all the way? I needed someone like you, a stable paragon of virtue, culture and wisdom to rely on and consult in moments of distress and darkness such as this! Why did you have to leave me, Thomas More! Oh, how I regret your tragedy, how I miss you and need you and curse my cruel, blind, hopeless, stubborn, ridiculous self! It's such an irony! I had to get rid of you since you refused to let me have my wife, and now she is the one who blames me the most for your murder! Who am I, and why am I such a monster? I wish I were small and weak, virtuous and honourable, pretty and vain, meaningless and harmless, like that poor departed bastard my friend Sir Thomas More, who refused to compromise with his idealism for the sake of my realism! Oh God, save me from myself! And save me from my wife, from the spectre of Catherine, from the horrors of this mercilessly dark black night of such an endless abyss of remorse!

Scene 2.

Anne Let me see Erasmus.
Henry You shall not see Erasmus.
Anne But I enjoy his conversation! I love to be taught by men who are wise and noble!
Henry He shall not see you. He is my guest.
Anne But am I not your Queen?
Henry Yes, but I am your King, and you shall obey me.
Anne But why will you not grant me a mere moment's joy?
Henry Because you will not grant me a mere moment's joy.
Anne But am I not your Queen, your humble wife, your most loyal and faithful of subjects? What power have I with you? How could I possibly be able to influence your kingly spirit?
Henry You make of yourself an annoyance, Anne, which I can not bear eternally. You annoy me more than you please me, and therefore I will annoy you more than please you.
Anne But Henry, you are being ridiculous!
Henry The King of England is never ridiculous! Take care, Anne!
Anne I saw you with Jane Seymour yesterday.
Henry Did you indeed? How interesting!
Anne Why are you so happy with her and not with me?
Henry Why are you happy with Sir Aubrey Stafford and not with me?
Anne What!
Henry I saw you with him some weeks ago, and I have seen you with him ever since.
Anne But he teaches me about music!
Henry And therefore you see him every day, laugh with him every day, flirt with him every day, perhaps even kiss him occasionally.
Anne You don't know what you are saying!
Henry And you don't know what you are doing!
Anne You don't know what you are thinking!
Henry I know perfectly well what I know, and I know nothing but facts. I am jealous of your friend, Anne Boleyn!
Anne You exaggerate your own fantasies in moments of dark melancholy. Your mind is not sound, Henry.
Henry If I am driven mad, you are the guilty one, mistress Whore!

Anne You are a danger to your country, to your family and to your closest friends. You should be taken care of! (*hurries out*)

Henry It is time to get rid of her. By refusing to answer my accusations she has proved herself guilty of the most atrocious of crimes. The Queen of England is a whore! Guards! (*enter guards*) Take the Queen of England to the Tower! (*They are perplexed.*) This instant! (*They leave.*)

Ah, Anne Boleyn, what a mill-stone you have been around my neck these last weeks! First you failed as a loving wife, I grew tired of your love, then as a mother, you bore me another worthless princess! And finally as a woman: you became jealous. A married woman should never grow jealous of her husband however dubious a character he is. She should obey him and be his loyal servant even if he wips and beats her, for the first reaction of a man whose wife gives vent to her jealousy is always or at least generally too get rid of her by one way or another. That is if he is guilty, and if she has grounds for her jealousy, which we all know frequently is the case.

Women, trust and love your husbands however they are, and you will be rewarded for it and remain happy. Fall for jealousy, and your husbands will never forgive you and hate your company ever after, until you are dead or outcast. Learn, beloved women, from the fate of this poor Anne Boleyn: never meedle with the black parts of your husbandmen's souls, never play with the monsters inside them, and you will preserve your heads and live in happy harmonious ignorance and be cherished and loved eternally by your husbands however rotten, dreadful and monstrous they in fact are. Be virtuous, ladies, be virgins in your minds, and be loved and adored by man forever as the precious angelic beings God and Adam originally intended you to be.

Scene 3. The Tower. Archbishop Cranmer and Anne Boleyn.

Cranmer Your head will be chopped off today. Have you anything to say?

Anne Being innocent I have nothing to say and desire nought but time to pray.

Cranmer Then, my Queen, I will leave you in peace. Tell me when you are enough at ease to face your future without cease.

Anne I will do so, noble Cranmer. Pray, do not leave my presence yet, but stay with me in this cell and let me enjoy the fact that an Archbishop prays with me quietly and gently for all that is and is to be. Let us not hear each other but merely pray with each other both only what his own mind tells him to pray, both ignorant of what to God the other wishes to say. Prithee, Archbishop, sit thee down here, and I will sit down here, And thus we'll pray in silent harmony, in the light of God, to God, for God, for all that God has made which He is happy about. Come now, Archbishop, sit thee down.

And when I'm gone I pray you:
Write it up, that all that lives, whatever form it takes, is sacred and divine in that it simply is alive. There is no God but life itself in every form.

Cranmer I'll make a note of it, my Queen.

(*They kneel at different positions in the cell. They pray together quite silently for some while.*)

(*enter guards*)

First guard His excellence the Duke of Suffolk!

Suffolk (kneels to the Queen) Your majesty, I have tried everything to save your head from the axe, but miserably I have failed. The King, I regret to say, hates you, and there is nothing more anyone can do about it.

Anne Gentlemen! How dare you interrupt our prayers? Don't you see that I and the Archbishop are deeply engaged in private conversations with God? Sacrilegious barbarians!

Suffolk My Queen, forgive me. Guards, get out! *(He pushes out the guards.)*
Forgive me, your grace. *(retires)*

Cranmer Well, my lady, shall we continue our private conversations with God?

Anne Yes, and they shall not be discontinued again.

Scene 4.

Jane Seymour How I am terrified by the fact that I am Jane Seymour these days! For me a Queen of England's blood has been shed, for me a Queen of England's head has been severed from her body; because of a King's love for me, a petty trifling lady, a Queen of England has lost her life, her self, and England. What a wild circus of nightmares is the world I live in! What will become of me? What will the King of England do with me? Where is this wild haze, called the world of love and politics, leading me? What will be my end? Will I end like the King's loves before me: as miserable, forlorn, outcast, half-mad incompetent ragged witches? Oh, I don't know. The most horrible thing of all is that I do not know. I am ignorant about everything, follow the carousel in which I was born, without knowing to what end or to what purpose. Does the King love me? Will he marry me? Will he kill me? Will I be made happy or unhappy? Will I die soon or live long? I know nothing. I am a helpless puppet in the hands of this King, of destiny, of the Lord, and as long as my strings are being pulled, I know that I am alive and that someone loves me, but that, in fact, is all I know. *(enter the King)*

(kneeling) My sovereign lord!

Henry Rise, my sweet lady Jane, I am no longer your sovereign lord. *(lifts her up)* I shall be your very own equal, husband and servant this very day and now! Come, Jane, follow me! I have arranged for our wedding this very instant! *(drags her away)*

Jane But...

Scene 5.

Henry Jane, I love you.

Jane You flatter me.

Henry That you say so makes me love you even more.

Jane You are a pleasing flatterer!

Henry Jane, do you know what is so good about you?

Jane I dare not guess.

Henry You are so little, Jane. You are so harmless, modest and unpretentious. You are the smallest woman I ever loved, and I never loved a woman more. You are lovable, Jane, that's what you are, and that's what a wife should be. Wives exist only for the purpose of being loved, whether they are Queens or no, and when they become anything else they become unbearable to loving men. You are lovable, Jane, you are nothing more, and that makes you ideal. Pray stay that way, Jane. Do not become proud like the Aragonian or a menace like the Whore. But what is it? You are crying!

Jane You hurt me by imagining such things!
Henry What things?
Jane That I should become proud or menacing, a whore or something worse.
Henry Jane, little Jane, sweet little dove-like Jane, be comforted! I meant no harm. Faith, I meant no harm. God knows the intention behind my words was only good, and God knows I'll never touch upon the subject again. Comfort thee, Jane! Don't fear me!
Jane I fear your imagination, not you.
Henry I'll never be imaginative again.
Jane Oh, but you must, if it serves the welfare of your state!
Henry Well then, I'll be most imaginative as a King, and never imaginative as a husband. (*Jane cries.*) But Jane, you're crying again!
Jane (through her tears) Only from happiness. Forgive me, my lord.
Henry There is nothing to forgive. (*crying*) Oh Jane, how I love you!
(They both cry in each other's arms.)

Act V Scene 1.
 The Court. All are assembled.

Cromwell The King's wife, whom he married on my advice, is expecting a child.
Cranmer Indeed? What splendid news! What glad tidings! Does England know?
Cromwell The news is being spread.
Bartholomew (to Horace) Everyone expects a son.
Horace Except for Cromwell here, who wants another Queen to fail.
Bartholomew He is odd, Cromwell.
Horace But a sharp one too. Take care of him, for he is rising in the King's favours as rapidly as he ceases to favour others.
Bartholomew Yes, he is a wicked and stalwart iron creature without an open mind.
Cromwell How do you do, Suffolk?
Suffolk Well, thank you, my lordship.
Cromwell Have you heard about the Queen?
Suffolk Yes, she is expecting a child, isn't she?
Cranmer In what month is she in? Do the physicians know?
Cromwell They believe she is in the fifth or the sixth.
Bartholomew Did you hear that, Horace? Three months more, and the son or girl is born.
Horace Yes, indeed, but see who enters now.
Bartholomew The Dutchman!
Horace Yes.
Suffolk Look! The learned Erasmus!
Cranmer Yes. Is he a guest of the King's or of the painter Holbein's?
Suffolk Of both, I should guess.
Cromwell (aside) I do not like respectable learned men. I rejoiced when Morus was beheaded, and I long for the departure of this besserwisser humanist Erasmus. Learned men and wisdom are best kept away from all politics, which is better served with dumbness and uncritical compliance everywhere.
Erasmus (aside) Strange are the ways of this court. When I was here last, the Queen of England was a notorious ill-reputed whore, hated in Europe and the topic of unoverestimable quantities of gossip, given all the guilt of England's leaguings with Luther and the Protestants. Now that strange Queen has been beheaded and replaced by a simple lady who really isn't a queen at all. Strange is the course of governments, of monarchs, of power, supremacy and sovereignty. My good friend

Sir Thomas More has been beheaded too in this short period of my absence from England, but apparently not on her protestant insistence but by the King's wish alone. Why did such a King suddenly attack such an innocent man? For the King is a King; there is no question about that, which makes his feat the more incredible and disputable. I loved Sir Thomas More, and I love this English King; why could they not love each other?

The emperor Charles has told me that England was made by God in a sense of humour, and that the British King was history's greatest joke. The emperor Charles is difficult to understand the meaning of, but I believe he means what he says whatever it may mean, which makes him quite the opposite of this King of England, who never means what he says, whatever he means to say.

How long shall I stay in England? I don't know. It's a strange and funny country to stay in, if you compare it to the rest of Europe, but at the same time it's the only safe and tranquil corner of the universe that I ever visited. I would like to die here. My dead spirit would find peace in this earth. I would like to rest by the side of Sir Thomas More, being a humble subject and servant of humankind just as he was. He was the only equal or perfect friend I ever met: all others mastered me or respected me, considered me nothing or something, neither of which I am. Only Sir Thomas More knew me, and we were together like one single mind and soul. Now he is gone, beheaded and dishonoured, which makes this my last refuge of safety in the world quite closed up to me; and like all sages in this mad world I am practically outlawed, since the ruler of the universal madness now is Martin Luther with his gangs of violence in writing and in practice on one side and that fanaticized Catholic Church with the Inquisition for its horrid method on the other. I stand powerless between those hells of fired exaggerations, and my quiet voice is drenched by their angry blinded propaganda. Common sense has lost her foothold in the universe, and who am I to stand alone against that wild barbaric beastliness consuming all religions and unscrupulously using them as instruments of evil? Violence has conquered all religions, laid them low in chains and prostituted them in order to have greater licence for its torture of humanity. King Henry is a symptom only of the great derailment of our age, and he at least has that good sign of health to show that he is daring as a lover.

But now it's time to put an end to this soliloquy. I am no actor. I am just a humble background thinker and philosopher. Where people wish to come together to enjoy themselves I have no right to be, because I penetrate all superficial so called happiness and cause its dissolution and dispersion. Since I cannot please I hereby quietly resign from all the vanity of this political and royal stage and show, because I should indeed return to that uniquely honourable busyness of man called work.
(*exit*)

Horace He's a gloomy one, isn't he?

Bartholomew We probably would not think so if we knew his thoughts.

Cromwell A suspicious character, don't you think so, Suffolk?

Suffolk I don't know. I don't know him.

Cranmer I know him. He is as suspicious as Sir Thomas More.

Scen 2. The same.

(*enter to the others Cromwell in great haste*)

Cromwell The Queen is having her child now!

Cranmer, Suffolk, Norfolk and others What? I say! This is exciting!

Cromwell She is in labour, and the King is with her.

Horace Is it a prince or a princess?

Suffolk Shut up, you fool! It is not time yet for that question.

Bartholomew You had better keep silent, master Horace!

Cromwell I'll be back shortly again, my lords, to inform you of the progressing events. *(exit)*

Cranmer Cromwell is gay and alert today, do you not think so, my lords?

Suffolk He certainly is. His future will be decided today by the natural composites of this Queen.

Cranmer (aside) He speaks shamefully.

Norfolk (to Suffolk) Have you ever seen her?

Suffolk No, not since she was married. The King has kept her for himself.

Norfolk They say she is an amiable woman.

Suffolk So I believe she is.

Bartholomew (to Horace) Five to one it'll be a boy!

Horace Done! I bet two pounds.

Cranmer Here comes the eager Cromwell yet again. His mill is watered well, his wheel is almost running wild with perfect self-complacency. *(enter Cromwell)*

Cromwell My lords! The child is coming! *(exit)*

Norfolk He was a quick one, wasn't he?

Suffolk In in a second and out in the next.

Cranmer He is eager to pursue his career.

Norfolk But look who comes here! *(enter Erasmus)*

Cranmer Rotterdamus!

Erasmus Good morning, worthy peers of England. Has the King got his heir yet? *(enter Cromwell)*

Cromwell No, the child has not been born yet, but it is well on its way, whether it's a boy or a girl.

Erasmus Is the Queen in pain?

Cranmer I should think so, yes. *(exit Cromwell)*

Erasmus Would you allow me to express a bold sort of wish, my lords?

Cranmer Certainly, worthy Erasmus. We are eager to hear it.

Erasmus Then humbly I hope in my heart for a royal son of England.

Cranmer Well expressed, worthy guest from Holland. And would you allow us to repeat the very same wish and words in the heart of our hearts?

Erasmus I certainly do, and keep you all company in thinking them again. *(enter Cromwell)*

Cromwell The child is born!

All (in a hubbub) Well! Tell us!

Cranmer Is the child a future King Edward or another Princess?

Cromwell Rejoice, o England! Another King has been born to guide you in the future! Long live Prince Edward, the heir to the throne of this blessed realm! Let's pray to God and thank Him for His divine gift to this poor land, so long since martyred by the lack and want of a strong and healthy male heir! *(He commences praying aloud. The rest follow. Finally they all cross themselves.)*

Cranmer Do you rejoice with us, Erasmus?

Erasmus I certainly do, your grace. With all my heart I rejoice with the King of England.

Horace (aside to Bartholomew) I wonder if Cromwell is content or dissatisfied.

Bartholomew I think he hides his frustration well. *(enter a doctor)*

Doctor My lords! *(All fall silent. A moment's pause.)*

Cranmer Well, what is it, dismal apparition?

Doctor (after a pause) My lords, the Queen of England is dead. *(exit)*
(All stand perplexed, then they all start speaking while Cromwell hurries out.)

(Curtain.)

Scene 3. Erasmus solus.

Erasmus Farewell, England. Once again I enter on an absence, the length of which is unknown to me. Perhaps it will be eternal. I came as an unexpected visitor, and as a stranger I depart, unknown to all but unfortunately not unseen. My figure should not have appeared at all; the reason why it did is hopelessly abstruse. But plenty did I see in this realm and find reason to wonder at, and the weightiest of all was King Henry the eighth. A more perplexing monarch was seldom seen in history. I do not regret my intrusion in this play; after all, it was just an experiment, it has been pleasing to watch the course of ancient lives for some while, and perhaps fate will grant me yet another return to see some more. That is in the hands of those behind the stage. Till then, farewell, adieu, au revoir, and so long to these wave-baked shores, these milk-white cliffs and this excellent parting station of Dover. The memories of those who once were more than shadows will not escape my mind's stores, at least not as long as I remain on the better side of life. Are the dead comforted by our thoughts upon them? That is one of many debatable questions. But it is better to remember them and think they might be pleased than to comfortably forget them whatever the consequences may be. Farewell, I bid even you, who remain alive behind me. I think of you, Archbishop Cranmer, and you, Cromwell, earls, fools and ladies waiting to take over the Queen's vacant throne. Who shall be the next, I wonder? I dare not guess. My hopes are that three will be enough.

And good luck to you, fair princesses, who I never encountered. I heard your names were Elizabeth and Mary. For you, together with your brother prince Edward, the future has reserved her hopes, so grow up carefully and never miss a lesson. It's almost superfluous to add that my highest, deepest and fondest wish of good fortune concerns you, worthy future Prince of Wales and King, beloved child called Edward. Take good care of these your priceless younger years, and be aware that there is no more positive insurance of a good and honourable life than careful education. History consists of knowledge, knowledge is but wisdom, wisdom is the end result and aim of every kind of education, and that's why all history is the consummate knowledge, being simply human realistic facts in perfect concentration and in limitless abundance.

My ship is leaving now. The captain is hoisting her sails. Soon there will be a sea between me and this island continent. I thank all and sundry for having been granted the fair privilege of having seen a play on stage.

(Bowling. Ship departs. Curtain.)

End of Part One.

Some Queens of England

or

The Tudor Comedy

Part Two

Dramatis Personae:

King Henry VIII
Mary,
Elizabeth, and
Edward, his children.
Thomas Cromwell, chancellor
Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury
Bartholomew, and
Horace, attendants
The Duke of Norfolk
The Duke of Suffolk
The Duke of Buckingham
The Duke of Northumberland
Ambassador
Anne of Cleve
Rowena, nurse to the royal children
Catherine Howard
Charlotte, her maid
Hans Holbein, painter
Bishop of Winchester
Earl of Surrey
Sir James, a lord
Sir Arthur
Lord Pembroke
Lord Chichester
Lord Hastings
A Shepherd
Ellinor, his lass
Catherine Parr
Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset
A messenger
A physician
A clown
A nurse

Ladies in waiting, lords, servants and guards from the Tower.

The stage is Westminster, London and thereabouts from 1539 to 1547.

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Act I, Scene 1.
Henry sitting in a chair.

Henry Jane, o Jane, little dove, why did you have to depart? Was it because you were not strong enough to match my potentiality? Or were you too lovable to be true? Do all lovable sweet and humble little princesses like you have to perish for their docility's sake? Weakness is the consequence of lovability and the other side of its supremely precious medal: a woman's lovability is her frailty, and the more she is loved, the sooner she will break. Fate, I curse thee for the bitter cynical lesson thou hast initiated me in! My Jane, my princess, I want thee back! (*enter princess Elizabeth*)

Elizabeth Father, are you asleep?

Henry Who asks if I am asleep?

Elizabeth No, you are not asleep.

Henry Elizabeth! What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in bed?

Elizabeth Yes, I should, and I would, if I could sleep, but I can't.

Henry But what are you doing here, then?

Elizabeth I wanted to show you my new embroidery. Here you are! (*shows it to him*) I can do much better, but, however, this can not be undone.

Henry (*examines the embroidery with admiration*) Elizabeth, my child, this is precious! How excellently well you have stitched this piece of cloth!

Elizabeth And, as I said, I will stitch even better in the future! Good night, father!

Henry Good night, my daughter. (*exit Elizabeth*)

That daughter of mine gives me quite some pleasure occasionally. She is only five years old, and yet her tongue is as eloquent as a lady's. She will be a queen some day. Ten times I see her before an eye of her sister Mary's disdainfully encounters mine for half a second with a glare of darkness from her soul. (*enter Cromwell*) Yes, what is it, Cromwell?

Cromwell Your Majesty, Hans Holbein is back from Germany.

Henry (*rising, eager*) Is he? Has he drawn the picture?

Cromwell He has, my liege.

Henry Well, where is it? Why have you not brought it before my eyes?

Cromwell It is on its way, Majesty. If it is convenient you will see it presently.

Henry "If", you say? Do you not know your King? (*pushing him aside*) Away! Let me see the portrait! Where is it?

Cromwell (*calling*) Bartholomew! (*enter Bartholomew*)

Bartholomew Yes, my lord!

Cromwell Bring in the portrait!

Bartholomew Yes, my lord! Presently!

Henry Have you employed Bartholomew?

Cromwell Only for tonight, Majesty.

Henry Don't you know he is my first page?

Cromwell Yes, but...

Henry You are becoming presumptuous, Thomas Cromwell! Take care of taking your self more liberties in the future, Cromwell, or I will take better care of you!

Cromwell Yes, Your Majesty.

Henry Where is the portrait? Why is Bartholomew lagging?

Cromwell He said he would come presently, Sire.

Henry Don't you sirrah me, Thomas Cromwell! What makes you apply such grossness and insolence? Do you long for the Tower?

Cromwell (*kneeling*) Your Majesty heard wrong, Your Majesty. I said not "sirrah" but "Sire". They are two different words, Sire.

Henry Nevertheless I heard you say "sirrah". There is no excuse for it. Where is the portrait?

Bartholomew (coming with the portrait) Here is the portrait.

Cromwell Yes, here is the portrait.

Henry You don't have to repeat it, Cromwell. I can very well see for myself that the portrait is here. Bartholomew, do not follow this gentleman's desires ever again.

Bartholomew No, Sire.

Henry Good. Depart. (*exit Bartholomew*)

So this is the portrait of Anne of Cleve. But – can it be true? Has this picture been drawn by a mortal hand? Is there in the world a woman like this? Cromwell, leave me alone. (*exit Cromwell*) I am stupefied by the overwhelming glory and beauty of this lady in Germany. How is it possible that such an angelic beauty has all these years lived in Europe without me having marked her presence? And how is it possible that such a divine virgin, in grace and complexion surpassing all my previous wives, exists at all in this world full of human creatures, as if she was one of them? I must marry her. Only an ass would hesitate. Cromwell! (*enter Cromwell*)

Cromwell Yes, my liege.

Henry I have decided to marry Anne of Cleve.

Cromwell Good, my liege.

Henry Don't smile so complacently, like a pimp who's making a fortune on his business. I have decided to marry her, not you on my behalf, whether you arranged our connection or not. – Court her for me, proceed with the common procedure, and make ready all the traditional preparations.

Cromwell Yes, my liege.

Henry And, Cromwell, before you leave, allow me to inform you, that this time, by bringing this lady to my knowledge, you have finally reached terra firma. Off you go.

Cromwell (kneeling in gratitude) My liege...

Henry I said, off you go. (*exit Cromwell, deeply affected*)

He will be my favourite lap dog now for the rest of my life. (*enter Horace*)

Yes, Horace? What is your wish?

Horace My lord, my lord of Suffolk is returned from France.

Henry From France? What was he doing in France?

Horace He was sent there with a letter for king Francis.

Henry Oh, yes, now I remember. Is he here? Suffolk, I mean? (*enter Suffolk*)

Suffolk Yes, my liege, I am here.

Henry Well, did Francis agree to cooperate? (*Suffolk is silent.*) You are silent, man! Did the Frenchman understand my proposition?

Suffolk Evidently he did not, your majesty.

Henry Did I not express it clearly enough, or why didn't he understand it?

Suffolk The French king understood it wrong. I am sure your proposition was as clear as daylight.

Henry How then could he fail to understand it correctly?

Suffolk (very serious) He was full of laughter, my liege.

Henry Did he laugh? Why?

Suffolk He probably understood it wrong, as I said, your majesty.

Henry I can not understand it. My proposition was as simple and clear as snow and water. And he laughed at it. What's so funny about it? – Depart, Suffolk! (*exit Suffolk*)

What is there to laugh at in a king's wish to see another King's troop of pretty court-ladies? All I wanted was another wife like Jane. But never mind, I have found Anne of Cleve instead. And by golly! She is the finest and most inspiring lady in Europe at this moment, I am sure! And I shall marry her! By God, how happy she will make me! I am a bad king perhaps, but the world knows I am not a bad lover. (*exit*)

Scene 2. The Court.

Suffolk We have waited here long enough. Is it true that the German lady has landed in England?

Henry Speak not so of my future wife, Suffolk! And remember that she will be your Queen!

Cromwell For a royal lady you can never wait long enough.

Henry Well said, Cromwell.

Horace (to Bartholomew) Have you seen Holbein's portrait?

Bartholomew (to Horace) Yes, she is a beauty.

Suffolk (aside) For two hours I have been standing here, waiting for a lady who promised to be here ages ago. I am not getting impatient, but my legs begin to grow weary of standing. *(to all)* I thought I heard something outside. *(Several lords hurry to the window.)*

Henry Is it my Queen? Is it Anne? Is it she?

Norfolk It is a woman at least

Suffolk coming out of a carriage.

Cromwell It must be Anne of Cleve, then.

Henry My heart is scurrying. My sweat is rising.

Norfolk Yes. She has an ambassador to lead the way.

Henry She is here! At last I may see the divine beauty! *(He rises from the throne and walks to the door.)*

Horace (to Bartholomew) The King is eager.

Bartholomew (to Horace) Maybe he will make a delightful show of it.

Horace (to Bartholomew) Let us hope so! I hear the ambassador's steps.

(enter ambassador)

Ambassador Your Majesty! *(kneeling)* I have the honour of bringing to you the fairest of fairies, the princess Anne of Cleve. *(enter two of Anne's ladies.)*

Henry I see only dull German maids. *(enter two more of them)*

Still I see no princess. *(enter Anne of Cleve)*

Is there no end to these dismal faces? *(enter two more ladies)*

Away, ladies! Where is your mistress? I want to see the Beauty, not baggy old cowish geese! Anne, where are you? *Exit by the door the ladies were entering.)*

Anne Is this the King of England?

Buckingham I am afraid so, my lady.

My lords, greet the princess Anne of Cleve.

All (kneeling, except Cromwell) Welcome to England, your highness.

Cromwell (kneeling) And especially so Cromwell wants you to feel.

Suffolk Horace, go and fetch back the King.

Horace Yes, Sir! *(exit)*

Anne I thank you all for your most graceful welcome. But where is your King?

(enter Henry with Horace. Henry looks at her perplexed.)

Henry (aside) Is this the Anne of Cleve Holbein painted?

Anne (kneeling) Although you seem a bit distracted at the moment, I commend myself to His Royal Majesty.

Henry (aside) No, it is not. *(to Anne)* My lady, you are an impostor.

Anne (shocked) What?

Henry (to the ladies) My ladies, where is the real Anne of Cleve? I have not seen her other than on a portrait yet.

Anne (to her ladies) Apparently we have landed in the wrong court. Come, my ladies, let's go back to Germany.

Henry (scrutinizing her) Wait for a short moment! Bartholomew!

Bartholomew Yes, your majesty.

Henry Go and fetch the portrait!

Bartholomew Yes, your majesty! *(exit)*

Henry In a short while we shall know whether Anne of Cleve is or not.
(enter Bartholomew)

Bartholomew Here is the portrait.

Henry Show it to the lady who thinks she is Anne of Cleve.
(Bartholomew shows it to her)

My lady, if you are Anne of Cleve, tell me who painted this portrait.

Anne I recall his name was Hans Holbein. His name is the finest in German art today. Dürer is a fop who tries to be a painter, while Holbein is a painter.

Henry You know the painter, but are you also acquainted with the lady of the portrait? If you are, tell me who she is.

Anne Why, it's me.

Henry All the people in this hall, get out! Disperse, all and sunder! Leave me alone with my failure as a wooer! Anne, stay here with me.

(exeunt all except Henry and Anne of Cleve.)

Henry I fell for a picture, for a humble painter's exquisite view of an ordinary lady's graces. I have been misguided by art to court an ordinary German wench, a simple woman without anything at all. I might as well have paid my respects to the first lady in the nearest corridor, the first girl in the first street outside Windsor, or any lass in the country. Only artists can seduce the minds of men so fatally: influenced by an artist, any man is sure to fall in love with any woman. All men, beware of artists! They will turn your inward eyes and turn you all to doting idiots!

But since Anne now has come from Germany for the sake of me, it seems that I can not let her down. – Anne, will you forgive my shameless demeanour thus far?

Anne If my lord commands me so, I shall obey him.

Henry Will you marry me?

Anne If you want me to.

Henry I do want to marry you. You are nothing more than a common lady in my regards, but a common lady is better than none, and especially so when she is so well served and so eager to serve with her lady's services as you apparently are, Catherine.

Anne My name is Anne, your majesty, and although I am not quite willing to marry a thing, forgive me, a king like you, I don't find anything against it either. But, King Henry, there is one condition which I must name.

Henry I have agreed to it already.

Anne But listen first. I want to be able to dissolve our union whenever I would think it meet to do so.

Henry Why?

Anne Because if our marriage becomes a burden to you I don't want to lose my head like your previous Anne, or end in total misery, like another of your late wives.

Henry Whatever you want you shall have, Anne. All I want is you. Cromwell! Suffolk! Buckingham! Bartholomew! *(enter the said personages and Anne's ladies)* Arrange our marriage! We shall marry tomorrow! *(lifting up Anne)* Anne, I dare express to the whole world my love for you. You look like any woman, yet you have charmed me more than any woman. Or perhaps any woman could charm me like you; I don't know. All I know is that I am charmed by this woman.

Anne King Henry, put me down!

Henry And so I shall, for now all the world knows that you are my love. Come, Anne! Come, my court! Let's now all have a banquet, with a ball at the same time!
(exeunt omnes)

Scene 3.
(*enter princess Mary*)

Mary I am a young woman, but my heart is as weary of the bitter sauce of life as my mother's on her death-bed. No one knows my black melancholy, no one is acquainted with my sordid self, and they are lucky not to be. For all the worms that consumed my mother's soul is my inheritance, and gladly I would abstain from displaying it.

My mother. What was she? Her name was Catherine. No one knows it today. Everyone forgot it willingly the day she was more brutally murdered than any criminal, the day she was banished from court, the day her royal spirit was bereft of her by brutal force for no other reason than humiliation, the day no one would defend the Queen of England, the day when her name was forbidden to be spoken any more and immediately forgotten by everyone except me. I never saw her die. I was kept away from her death-bed. To me she is not dead. Her indescribable humiliation has haunted me ever since my father effected it. In my mind her misery is constantly still alive. She is crying for me every night.

But who is coming here? My little sister Elizabeth! Her mother's memory is today as vitiated as my father's only royal consort's.

Elizabeth Mary, sweet sister, how do you do?

Mary Why do you call me sweet sister?

Elizabeth Because you are my sweet sister. All sisters are sweet.

Mary Are they indeed? What makes you think I am so sweet?

Elizabeth The fact that you are my elder sister.

Mary (hugging her) Elizabeth, o Elizabeth, how grateful I am for your presence here! What a solace and delight you are to my dark broodings, what a pretty little angel you are in this dark hell! I love you, Elizabeth. Always remember that, even when I am cruel to you. I love you.

Elizabeth Why should you be cruel to me?

Mary Why should men be cruel to women and any beings cruel to each other? God alone knows that, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Don't you rather think Satan is responsible for all cruelty?

Mary Indeed he is, Elizabeth, indeed he is. But God alone knows why Satan is, that is, if any of them is at all. But let's not speak religious nonsense. There isn't on earth a topic of conversation more confusing. Besides, we must not forget we are of different faiths.

Elizabeth But we both believe in God.

Mary Do we? Yes, I suppose we do. But tell me, Elizabeth, what have you been doing today?

Elizabeth I have been stitching.

Mary Have you been eager at it? Are you making any progress?

Elizabeth I am, sweet sister. Look! (*She shows an embroidery.*)

Mary You are an expert already, my child. Do you know, Elizabeth, that your mother and I were nearly the same age?

Elizabeth I do not understand you.

Mary I am as old as your mother was.

Elizabeth Then I must be as old as your mother was, since I was born much older than yourself.

Mary Stupid child! Your head is empty!

Elizabeth If it is empty, how could it then be heavy? It even aches sometimes.

Mary You are a child, Elizabeth! That is why I love you. Only children are ignorant about love, only children do not return love with hatred. Never grow up, Elizabeth. Remain a child.

Elizabeth What was that? How could I possibly fail to grow up?

Mary Don't listen to me, Elizabeth. Never listen to dark miserable women. Enjoy your childhood. (*Elizabeth plays.*) Yes, play, Elizabeth. Play with your possessions, play with the universe of your childhood, enjoy yourself while you can. Idle away your time until you grow up, for then you'll have time for idleness and happiness no more. Play until you discover yourself, have fun until the first blow of maturity hits you, play until you learn you had a mother who had a mother who all were most miserable indeed. Enjoy your blissful ignorance of the world, be happy with your own secret world of beautiful illusions, enjoy your lack of knowledge while you can. The day will come when someone tears the curtain off, when all people change into monsters before your sight, when all your love, hope and faith is blown out by the merciless hatred and humiliating imperiousness of the world, as a small candle-light despite its defencelessness is blown out by the thunderstorm. Yes, play, Elizabeth, play while you can, for one day life will play with you. – Who is coming? My father's latest button-hole.

(enter Anne of Cleve)

Anne Princess Elizabeth, shouldn't you be in bed at this hour?

Elizabeth Yes, I should, but I do not want to.

Anne There are many things in life, Elizabeth, which you must do whether you like it or not, and usually it is quite refreshing to do them, once you manage to get out of the worst habit comfortable laziness. So go to your chamber, young girl! (*Elizabeth does not show much enthusiasm.*) Lady Rowena! (*enter lady Rowena*) Guide princess Elizabeth to her bed-chamber, and see to it that she is put to bed.

Lady Rowena Yes, your royal highness.

Elizabeth (to Rowena) But why must I when I do not want to?

Rowena (to Elizabeth) You simply must. (*exit with Elizabeth*)

Anne Were you keeping her up, princess Mary?

Mary No. I am innocent.

Anne I believe you are. All catholics are innocent in these days. She is an intelligent child, don't you think so, Mary?

Mary Why do you say that all catholics are innocent these days?

Anne But they are. Persecuted people are always innocent. There are no people more innocent than the Jews. The protestants today are the villains, for they persecute the catholics, at least in this country.

Mary If my father heard you he would eject you.

Anne The sooner the better. He is a monster.

Mary Do you really think so?

Anne Of course. I have seen worse monsters, though.

Mary Are there really worse monsters than he?

Anne I can tell you the world is full of them. Every man is more or less a monster.

Mary If that is what you think of men, why did you marry?

Anne I had to marry. It suited my family and Europe. But I am not really married.

Mary What do you mean?

Anne I have tied him to my finger. Our marriage is almost a fraud. But you mustn't spread this further.

Mary I am used to burying secrets.

Anne If the King and I can not love each other I may leave him.

Mary It's a strange union.

Anne It's the ideal union for a woman.

Mary You may be right. You are wise, step-mother, wiser than Anne Boleyn.

Anne Please do not call me your step-mother. As long as I am here at court to serve a king's caprices, I am your loving mother.

Mary (embracing her) Yes, I believe you are. But I must go to bed now. Good night, my second mother.

Anne Good night, my English daughter. *(exit Mary)*

My husband's two daughters are from two different worlds. One is a catholic lady belonging to the severity of royal Spain; the other, still a child, is a girl almost born in the country. They will probably both be queens some day, for their brother was born sick. But if they become queens, what fate will two such extremely incongruous ladies bestow on England? *(exit)*

Scene 4.

Henry Anne, I wish you to dine with me today.

Anne As your majesty pleases.

Henry As your majesty pleases! I am sick of that phrase! Have you nothing better to say?

Anne If my words displease your majesty I shall be quiet.

Henry Nonsense! You shall not be quiet as long as you are my wife! Why are you so unsociable, Anne? You are not like a wife and Queen at all. You are like a shy lady in waiting! Why are you so, Anne?

Anne God made me what I am, and there is nothing I can do about it.

Henry I made me what I am, and there is nothing God can do about it! Come, Anne! Prove that you are a lady! Be a little womanly! Come, accompany me to the dining-hall! *(They go to the dining-hall.)*

Scene 5. The dining-hall.

Henry Is the table laid? Good! Let's sit down, Anne! You shall sit here, and I shall sit here. Is it not a beautifully furnished table? Have you ever seen more glorious food, a greater cornucopia of fresh fruit, more delicious red bottles of wine, or felt a finer more irresistibly appetizing bouquet in the air? Sit down, Anne, do not stand dreaming. Have you ever dreamt of a more perfectly well roasted turkey? Only food like this is good enough for the Queen of England and her honourable husband. Eat, Anne! Let the wine wash your throat, and the table, if it suits your mood. Throw the bones behind you, and try to hit the ceiling with them, like I do, when I am not too tired. A banquet has been served to you, Anne, and only a royal fool can resist a royal banquet! *(Anne pours herself some wine.)* Is that all? Half a glass of wine, and food not even covering a quarter of the plate? You offend me, Anne! How can you insult an old monarch so?

Anne Our stomachs are different, Henry. You fill yours and I fill mine according to their size and hardiness. I am not yet used to the barrels of food which constitute your diet.

Henry In those words, Anne, you expressed not our difference but the fact that you do not want to be like me. I am after your love, Anne, and you know it, but every time I try to approach your feelings and spirit you retire, saying you are different, you are not yet quite used to England, you have much yet to learn, and all sorts of other kinds of balderdash. Why are you so, Anne? Why don't you want to open your heart, your mind, your self to me?

Anne What do you think of your country, king Henry?

Henry What's that got to do with us?

Anne I seldom have questions to trouble you with, but now I have one. Tell me, what do you think of England?

Henry But your question has nothing to do with our topic of conversation. What do I, Henry, king of England, think of England? What a silly question to ask!

Anne You charged me with offending silence, king Henry. As soon as I open my mouth you charge me with lack of sense. What do you want, king Henry? Silence or talk?

Henry I hate your silence.

Anne Then answer my question. I believe it's the second or third I've ever offered you.

Henry You are odd, Anne, but I'll try to satisfy your query. What do I think of... hem... well, it's an island, and a good island to dwell on. What is it more? Hem. Well, I like it in a way. Hem. – Anne, I really don't know how to answer that question.

Anne You mean you don't know what to think of England, you say. How much do you think of England?

Henry Not much.

Anne You don't think of England, in other words.

Henry Not much.

Anne And that's the king I am married to. Do you know why I came to this country, your majesty?

Henry You came to marry me, I suppose.

Anne No, I came here to marry a King.

Henry And who am I if not that King?

Anne You are what a King shouldn't be: a crowned man who doesn't think of his country.

Henry You insult me, Jane!

Anne Jane? Who is Jane?

Henry You have angered me, Jane! You have disappointed me, Jane! – forgive me, Anne. You are not the woman I want. Get out of this court, Anne! I'll divorce you!

Anne No one is forcing you to remain in my presence, your majesty.

Henry (rushing out in fury) Cromwell! (*exit*)

Anne I meant every word of what I said. This man is not a king, wherefore I will gladly leave this unroyal stage. (*exit*)

Scene 6. Enter Cromwell.

Cromwell Who am I? I am the most well-contented man in England these days, second only to the King. And with what of a glorious sudden have I risen! I am next to the King now in power, only because I know how to make a royal match. I was the man who decided to bet on the quiet horse Anne of Cleve, only I could have engendered the ingenious idea of making the finest painter of men in Europe draw her picture, and only I, finally, could have prepared and organized so eloquently the King's final meeting, wedding and everlasting union with the virtuous and wise Anne of Cleve. I arranged the marriage which put the King on his feet, and consequently he has put me on mine. Good business and fair play is the way to all the happiness and harmony which life can give.

Henry (from behind) Cromwell!

Cromwell But I hear a bull roaring. Who has let loose a bull in these precious China halls?

Henry (enter) Cromwell! You are a traitor!

Cromwell (shocked at first, can't believe it) Who? Not I? Surely you can't mean me?

Henry Don't act sillier than you are, you worthless nincompoop!

Cromwell (kneeling, understanding it's serious after all,) Your majesty, say not so.

Henry You have wedded me to a bitch, a cow, a witch and shallow filly!

Cromwell Your majesty, there must be some mistake...

Henry Yes, an awful mistake has been committed: I have trusted you. I am no longer your majesty but your relentless judge! Guards!

Cromwell Your majesty, my liege, my supreme commander, hear me first!
(*enter guards*)

Henry Take away this man and behead him.

Cromwell I beseech your majesty!

Henry Everything you say may be taken down and used as evidence against you.

Cromwell But...

Henry But what? Pray, but me no buts! All things must come to an end, Cromwell, and so must your ambitions.

Cromwell You sound like a nightmare.
(*enter Suffolk and Norfolk. They stop as they enter, taken aback by the scene.*)

Suffolk What's this?

Norfolk Cromwell is surrounded by guards.

Suffolk Will he be taken away? (*enter Horace behind them*)

Horace The King's marriage has failed.

Suffolk No! Not again!

Henry Take him away, guards!

Cromwell (kneeling again. He is not to be moved.) For the second time I kneel to your majesty, praying for my innocence. Your majesty, you are unjust in sentencing me to death, for I have done nothing except my duty!

Suffolk People grow sensible when they fear death. (*enter Cranmer*)

Cranmer Is it true that Cromwell has lost the King's favours?

Norfolk Look for yourself.

Horace The King has married once too much.

Henry It was not your duty, Cromwell, to fool me into marriage with a mare, but to grace me with a Queen.

Cromwell And so I have, God help me! If Anne of Cleve is not a Queen good enough for England, then I am not a subject good enough to walk on England's sacred earth!

Suffolk For once he is speaking the truth.

Norfolk Poor Cromwell. No one ever liked him.

Henry Take him away, guards! Drag him away if necessary, for I can stand this scene no more! Away, lords! Stare not at your exhausted monarch so!

Cranmer What will you do next, my liege?

Henry I will divorce her! Look to it, Thomas Cranmer! (*the others are retiring*)

Cranmer I will, my liege. (*exeunt all but Henry*)

Henry Love, love, love! It drives me crazy! One more wife has bitten my back, one more of life's constant disappointments has moved me further from life, from love, from all joy and bliss and fortune. Love! I will pursue thee forever! Life is nothing without thee, I am nothing but a dullard without your energetic company, fit for nothing but senility! All I want is love, but, oh, how I hate false love! (*crying*) You fall in love only to find your love is false, but I shall continue like that until I am dead, for love is the only cure and contrary to loneliness, and loneliness is nothing but the one way road to evil and the dead end of death. Love, I don't mind if you drive me to madness or hell, as long as you keep driving me on!
(*exit*)

Act II Scene 1.

Maid Oh, Catherine, the King loves you!

Catherine Howard Hush! Do not speak such words. They are dangerous. If anyone overhears you...

Maid He will propose to you any day!

Catherine I am afraid of him. Every time he crosses my path and looks at me I tremble.

Maid Soon, Catherine, you will be a Queen, a holy mother of England! You will be loved by the famous king Henry VIII, he will kiss you and fondle you, he will flatter you and adore you passionately in his bed. Oh Catherine, how I envy you!

Catherine Give me that mirror. (*the maid gives her the mirror.*) Who am I? My name is Catherine Howard. I am a lady at the court of king Henry VIII. I am looked upon by him, spied on by his servants and much rumoured about by all lords and bishops around the King. Is it true that the King likes me? I have no idea. All court-ladies are constantly watched by our sovereign when he has divorced or lost another wife. He has divorced two and killed one. For the sake of his wives he has murdered two secretaries of state and one archbishop. I fear him. I do not want his love, I do not want to be at court, I do not want to be Catherine Howard. But I am Catherine Howard, and there is nothing I can do about it. – What makes you think the King loves me?

Maid He whispers with his lords whenever he sees you, sometimes he points his finger at you, and there is always a gleam in his eye when he looks upon you.

Catherine I fear him.

Maid Love is nothing to be afraid of, sweet lady Catherine. Love is every woman's duty, whether she likes it or not, and the more she is loved, the better. Every woman has to be loved, and that is every woman's tragedy. Forgive me, Catherine. I talk too much.

Catherine No, not at all. I love the company of your speech, though it may harm me if anyone listens. (*someone giggles*)

Who giggled? (*the maid is petrified with fear*) Look behind the tapestry! (*the maid lifts the gobelin. A girl is seen.*)

Catherine Princess Elizabeth!

Elizabeth I heard everything you said.

Maid If you carry it any further...

Catherine Hush, Charlotte.

Elizabeth What is love, lady Catherine?

Maid Love is what you should know nothing about.

Catherine Hush, Charlotte. Love, Elizabeth, is something which, when you learn what it is, you wish you had never learned it.

Elizabeth I don't understand that, Catherine. How could one possibly want to do without a certain piece of knowledge when all knowledge is good?

Catherine Listen to that girl, Charlotte! All knowledge is not good, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth That I don't understand either. Everyone except you has told me that all knowledge is good. Why do you hold a different view from all the others?

Catherine (to the maid) You can't speak with children, for they are too sensible: they have unconsciously more sense than grown-ups.

Elizabeth You confound me, Catherine. You do not answer my questions.

Catherine Because I can not answer them. Go and ask from somebody else answers for your queries. (*exit Elizabeth*)

Maid You disappointed her.

Catherine So do all grown-ups with children.

Maid I hope you didn't make her cry.

Catherine I hope she doesn't keep our conversation in her memory for long. Hoo! It is cold in here! Let's leave this room and go out to the fire in the hall.

Maid But I can light the fire in here.

Catherine No. Let's go out. The fire there is greater and more fascinating.

(exit maid before Catherine)

(aside) The King loves me. Shall I continue to be afraid of his love, or shall I expect something of it? *(exit)*

Scene 2. The studio of Hans Holbein.

(Hans is busy about his work. Enter Anne.)

Anne Dear Hans, I came to bid you good-bye.

Hans (turning around and kneeling) Your highness!

Anne I am not high any more, Hans. I am returning to Holland.

Hans The divorce is over?

Anne Yes, the King is expert at quick disposals of wives. Is there anything you would like me to bring with me to Holland?

Hans It is kind of you to think upon it. No, I have no one to love in Holland, since Erasmus died long ago.

Anne I might visit the Emperor later on. Shall I send him your respects?

Hans Please do.

Anne And thank you for the portrait.

Hans It was nothing.

Anne It was all my life. It gave me all and took it all away from me. Thanks to your art, my whole life went into that portrait.

Hans I hope you don't regret it.

Anne I believe the King alone regrets it, but he will soon be diverted otherwise.

Hans Farewell, good princess. Please give all my love to Germany and Holland.

Anne That I will. Good-bye.

Hans Good-bye.

Scene 3. The King's Court.

King Henry I hate this world, this life, this sceptre and this crown, but I love this court. Hey, joker! Come here and show me your mind's latest inventions!

Suffolk You are gay today, your majesty.

Henry If you put the finger on the hole, the punctured wine-barrel will cease to flow. *(The clown comes to the King.)*

Clown You called for a joker. I am not a joker.

Henry What are you then, if not what you are, for everyone can see that you are a joker?

Clown I am ridiculous seriousness foolishly dressed up.

Henry And why is seriousness ridiculous? Do we not all know that life is a most serious battle, which one has to command the forces of or be defeated by? Why is it ridiculous to take serious life seriously?

Clown You try to be serious. It isn't fit for a clown.

Henry Am I a clown?

Clown A clown is somebody who amuses people. You amuse the world.

Henry Do you think I am amusing?

Clown Anyone is amusing who rises above the others. Anyone is amusing who has a decent part to play.

Henry Is my part in this play decent?

Clown Almost.

Henry Away, clown! You are making fun of this old fatigued monarch!

Clown Well, you asked me to! I only did my job!

Henry And what am I doing if not my job? Is my job serious enough to be ridiculous enough to be derided by you?

Clown Yes, because you are not doing your job.

Henry What am I doing here then?

Clown You are just sitting and entertaining and trying to do a decent job out of your wives, while they just can't match you.

Henry I never matched myself, and neither did my four wives. Our matches were always made by others. Those were the ones who failed, since they never could find the right one for me.

Clown Failures are always matchless.

Henry Sorry, I can't match you any more. You go too far beyond me.

Clown That's precisely what I mean. You are too matchless to ever be matched by anyone who executes failures.

Henry (to Suffolk) What on earth does he mean, Charles?

Suffolk Search me. I don't think he knows himself.

Henry Yes, let's not go too deep into his wandering mind. Get away, clown. Your jokes are too difficult for our wits.

Clown Nay, it's your wits that are too difficult to be executive about your failures.

Suffolk That's enough, clown. The King is too soft in the head for your enigmas.

Clown Definitely, since he can not even solve his own.

Henry What do you mean?

Clown That's the most difficult question of all. My job is to stay out of all serious meanings.

Henry You are a stranger on this stage. You do not belong here. Out with you, old antiquated fool! (*aside*) I need something better than an old grotesque masqueraded philosopher to cheer me up. Suffolk!

Suffolk Your majesty!

Henry No, not you, Bartholomew!

Bartholomew Your majesty!

Henry What was her name, you know who I have in mind, that pretty little lady...

Bartholomew Lady Catherine Howard?

Henry Yes. Go and fetch her. (*exit Bartholomew*)

(*aside*) All I can give is intimacy. A royal sovereign must not be intimate with men. Consequently he has no alternative but women. (*enter Bartholomew with Catherine*) Catherine?

Catherine (*kneeling*) Your majesty.

Henry Do not bow. Do not blush. Look into my face. I hate being called anyone's majesty. Rise and sit beside me. I want company in this dreary age. (*Catherine rises and sits beside him.*) That is better, my sweet. Call me Henry. Or uncle Henry, if you find me too old to be pleasurable. Do you like my court, Catherine?

Catherine I find it very exciting to be at court, your majesty.

Henry Exciting? Why?

Catherine Everyone is so afraid of you.

Henry Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! (*He guffaws wildly. To everyone present, still merry:*) Are you frightened of me, my lords and ladies? Ha-ha-ha! Well, you must be, considering all the heads I chopped off in my younger years! But believe me, dear assembly of eloquent scare-crows, I will chop off no more! You have nothing to be afraid of. The

English Nero is tamed by now. *(to Catherine)* But you are not frightened of me, are you?

Catherine I do not know.

Henry You shouldn't be. You will become my little protégée. I will protect you, that means. Do you know any dances?

Catherine I do.

Henry Then we shall dance. Come everyone, to the ball-room!

Suffolk But your majesty...

Henry What objections have you against my pleasures, brother?

Suffolk Remember the warnings of the physician...

Henry Physicians! Physicians are no better than witchcraft! They exist only to limit our freedom! Come, Catherine. I will dance with you.

(exit Henry, Catherine, and the better part of the court.)

Suffolk (to Northumberland) The King does not bother to keep his senses any more.

Northumberland Did he ever?

Suffolk At least he tried to.

Northumberland That was long ago. He lost his senses when he deserted his first wife, which was his only sensible match.

Suffolk Don't say that in public.

Northumberland Everyone in the public says so.

Suffolk I mean, don't let the King hear it.

Northumberland Of course not.

Suffolk But we can't let him loose on the floor.

Northumberland What on earth do you mean?

Suffolk His senses are far gone, when he believes himself young enough to dance, which he hasn't done for five or seven years.

Northumberland Grant him some enjoyment. He won't have much left anyway. And the less sensible he becomes with the years, the more amusing it will be to see him continue acting his folly. *(exit)*

Suffolk I like the King. I would not like to see him fall off the throne. *(exit)*

Scene 4. The ball-room.

Henry Music! Dancers! Prepare yourselves! Make yourselves ready! My court shall dance again, like it used to do! Come, all! Listen to this sprightly tune!

(They dance. Henry falls.)

All (in dismay) Oh! *(Some help him up. He is panting and exhausted.)*

Henry Leave me alone! Let me dance alone! Kate, my little partner, where are you? *(Kate stands by him.)* Come, let's go and sit by yonder table. I can not dance. My swollen toes are in the way. We shall talk instead. I have eaten too much today. *(Courtiers, ladies and Bartholomew help him to the table. He sits down. Catherine sits down opposite to him.)*

I am happy, Catherine, because the chair did not break. I am always afraid that chairs will break under me one day. The times are so unstable. *(Dries his front.)* Whew! So much water gushes forth for so little! Don't you think, Catherine, – this is one of my most private thoughts, – don't you think that we speak a horribly shallow language? We make use of so little words, endow our speeches with so little imagination and speak but shallowly with each other, that I am brought to engender an earnest wish for a great poet to come soon and better our language. Is not such a thought agreeable, Catherine?

Catherine What thought, your majesty?

Henry I long for such a poet. I wish he lived today, in this very age, so that I could talk with him, learn a better language and enjoy his company, from late nights to early mornings.

Catherine I did not know the King of England was imaginative.

Henry All kings are, Catherine, or else they would hardly sit long on the royal stool. You need imagination, Kate, to cope with the severest loneliness, the royal loneliness. But what are we sitting here idling about? Let us play cards!

Catherine Cards? I do not play cards.

Henry Then you shall be taught the honourable art at once. Look! This is a pack of cards.

Catherine I see.

Henry Look and learn. This is the ace of diamonds. This is the ace of spades. This is the ace of hearts. This is the ace of... (*curtain*)

Svne 5. The Court.

(*Henry entering the court with Catherine.*)

Henry Catherine, you must let me marry you one day.

Catherine Whenever you want.

Henry (to the assembled court) My lords, how fare you all?

All Only well, your majesty.

Henry To hear that cheers me enough. Any news?

Suffolk None, my liege.

Henry Then let us all be merry. (*enter a messenger*) Oh, there seems to be some news despite our beautiful weather. What message do you bring, messenger?

Messenger Your majesty, king James of Scotland...

Henry Oh, I am tired of these wars of mine. Well, what about this James of Scotland?

Messenger He craves for mercy and peace.

Henry I will conquer Scotland first.

Messenger He is tired of war.

Henry Naturally, who isn't? So am I. But what else is there to do? A politician who does not war will be bored and accused of sloth. Tell old Jimmy we'll have to fight it out or go out like candles. (*aside*) His light will soon go out whether I war or not; that is why he begs me to show a little mercy. But Scotland is too inviting to be left alone with her misfortunes. – Out, messenger, and inform James of my ruthless disposition and intention to go on with the war until we reach an end. (*exit messenger*)

And now, my court, let us be merry. My lords and my ladies, I hope you all know who this Catherine is?

Suffolk My lord, all we know about her is that she is some kind of court-lady.

Henry Then, Suffolk, Charlie boy my best friend, know and inform the court of the fact that she will be their next Queen of England.

Bartholomew (aside to Horace) I bet you five to one she will be gone within five years.

Horace (aside to Bartholomew) I bet you ten to one she will be gone within thirty months.

Bishop of Winchester Did I hear you right, your majesty? You intend to marry yet again?

Henry You heard me right, Winchester, if that is what you heard.

Suffolk (to Norfolk) The King is getting old. Will he never cease this mad chase for earthiness and this cruel play with human beings?

Norfolk It's the only sport he has left. His body can't take any other and will probably have to abstain from the last one soon enough also. Let's grant him his last sport.

Henry But, my dear lords and ladies, you seem to be more perturbed and shocked by this novel engagement than happy and glad for my sake. Is this the way to celebrate a King's affiancing? Rejoice, o subjects, for the King is happy again!

Suffolk (to the lords) Well, my lords, what are you waiting for? Express your true feelings! Who is not happy when the King is happy?

Earl of Surrey (aside to Horace) Send for the musicians. There will probably be a banquet later on.

Suffolk (kneels before the King) Your royal majesty, God knows how profoundly moved we all are by the freshness of your new feelings and by the beauty of your becoming bride. God knows how happy we all are and England with us. Our joy is too total to be adequately expressed.

Henry Rise, Suffolk, Charlie boy. It is a pity I can not raise you in your rank, since you are a duke already and part of my royal family, but be certain that you have risen in my esteem.

Bishop of Winchester When will the wedding be?

Henry So eager at it, Winchester? No sooner engaged than married, is that your way of having it? You may marry us today, if you want. But no, today we must have a banquet. We'll have to wait a day or two, maybe a week. But where is the music? Music! Come here! Tune this national joy, and let the world hear it! (*enter musicians*) Come, my court, my lords and ladies! We shall have a banquet anon. (*exeunt*)

Act III Scene 1. The country.

(*Enter a shepherd and his lass. They sit down under an oaken tree.*)

Shepherd Here is a nice spot. Good enough, don't you think, Ellinor?

Ellinor Indeed I do think so, my pretty Hamnet.

Shepherd What shall we discuss?

Ellinor I prefer being quiet. There are more serious things than empty discussions.

Shepherd Don't you like amiable talk?

Ellinor Yes, but not unnecessarily, not in this blissful heart of mother Peace, Dame Nature.

Shepherd Do you think we might violate her with our talk?

Ellinor She exists to be violated but not with idle talk.

Shepherd What on earth do you mean?

Ellinor Why don't you just have a guess.

Shepherd Ellinor! You can't be serious!

Ellinor Why not? What else are we earnest lovers for? And what else is Nature for?

Shepherd But look! Who comes here?

Ellinor He looks like some nobleman.

Shepherd He is a nobleman indeed! Just look at his broad figure!

Ellinor He resembles the King.

Shepherd That was the tongue of your imagination. The King is more slender and stately.

Ellinor He used to be. That was long ago. Since then he's been married four times.

Shepherd I thought it was five.

Ellinor Well, his marriages keep accelerating. But that's no business of ours. Let's ignore the gentleman and make love.

Shepherd You are right, my innocent pigeon. The gentleman is coming this way with his family. Let's move to the other side of this protecting tree and thus keep out of their way, shall we?

Ellinor Yes, let's! (*They move over behind the tree and are no longer seen.*)

Shepherd My dove!

Ellinor My love!

(Enter king Henry with Catherine Howard, princess Mary, princess Elizabeth, and some lords.)

Elizabeth Why are we not out here in the countryside more often? Listen to the swallows in the air, the skylarks in heaven, the chaffinch in the trees and the tragic song of the lapwing in the field! Why, father, do we not go for excursions like this more often? I hate being imprisoned in the city, and I think everyone does who occasionally knows the country. Why, father, do we have to stifle in the city?

Henry My child, I promise we shall visit the country every time you choose in the future.

Elizabeth Sweet wonderful father, you shall be kissed for that! (She kisses him on his chin. All laugh.)

Catherine Don't you enjoy the country, Mary?

Mary I love the country, but it frightens me by its wild freedom, so I love London and Westminster more.

Elizabeth Mary is always like that. She never enjoys anything perfectly. There is always something she would rather have than the best. (laughing) Mary, sweet good sister, show some cheer! Be happy with us, just for today!

Mary But I am happy, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Then show it! (runs along before the others) Ha-ha-ha! Oh nature, here I am, your own little natural naughty child Elizabeth! Ha-ha-ha! (she runs out from the scene.)

Henry (to Catherine) It is a joy to see my daughter so happy.

Catherine Are you not equally pleased to see me quite happy?

Henry Of course I am, Catherine. (to Mary) Mary, go and play with Elizabeth. Keep her from doing some mischief. She always does when she is alone. I don't want to lose her. (aside) She is my only daughter.

Mary If you wish it, father. (exit after Elizabeth) Elizabeth!

Henry (to himself) The country pleases my disposition and keeps my bad temper at some distance. Nature soothes my soul and predilects my spirits in good directions. I wish I were married to Nature. I wish all the grace and charm of Nature was incarnate in one woman whom I were married to. (He is immersed in his own thoughts.)

Catherine (talking meanwhile with one of the lords) Oh? So your mother died in Shrewsbury?

Lord She did, my Queen.

Catherine And what did she die of?

Lord No one ever knew. She just suddenly died. Some attribute her death to witchcraft.

Catherine Are there many witches in Shrewsbury?

Lord There are indeed, madame. They come by night, hunt virgins with wicked dreams every Saturday and urge good-looking men to rape virtuous ladies with horrible frequency.

Catherine How exciting!

Henry What are you two talking about?

Catherine The witches of Shrewsbury. It's a fascinating topic to discuss. Sir James, initiate his majesty in our mystery.

Sir James Yes, my sovereign, Shropshire is full of witches.

Henry And so is the country, I believe.

Sir James What do you mean?

Henry A witch is a lady whom you can't befriend. She evades you, she is rather mystic and untouchable than humanly sociable. Therefore the greatest of witches is Nature. In every tree, every bush, every bird and every abject animal there is a mystic witch, for you can't easily communicate with any of them.

Sir James But to that there is an explanation.

Henry I disbelieve you.

Sir James Nay, do not, your majesty. Nature is frightened of man. Man hunts her deer, eats her noblest animals, fells her majestic trees and scars her earth with his plough and even burns down her forests occasionally. So naturally Nature tries to evade further frictions with man. Naturally she isn't easily befriended.

Henry But isn't that the very reason why witches become witches? A witch is an ordinary lady to begin with. One day misfortune seizes her: she is ravished. Nay, start not, dear company, bear my honest language, please, and hear me to the end! She is no longer respectable, honourable or good for decent courting. Trying to bear her shame she abandons herself to loneliness and unwholesome grieving: she becomes a mystic, secluded, unpopular creature, until one day someone understands she is a witch.

No witch has been more ill-treated than Nature. No witch has walked a more horrible path to her tragic state than the finest of madams, our universal Nature. Like you said, my lord, we have burnt her forests and chased her animals to death, built our cities on her grave and sacrificed her sanctities for the sake of building our roads; what we have done to her has driven her into a mystery, into a strange and tropic witch. All witches are tragic phenomena, and the greatest of them all is Nature. But since she is our very own mother, her influence is all-embracing, and we can never escape it, and her reaction must be natural. Thus, one day or other, sooner or later, my guess is that all humanity will encounter a terrible vengeance from her mother's side, which will only be natural but as fatal to man as man has been to Nature.

Sir James I can not argue with you, my liege.

Henry And yet, hear me to the end, that is why both she and we will survive. A witch is something immortal. Her sufferings are impossible for mortals to estimate. God alone knows how much the heart of life has suffered from the pangs of history, but those her very sufferings, hardships and deadening blows urge her forward, renew her strength and is the basic reason why she ever continues, why a new spring always returns after winter, why grass, bushes and novel trees always spring forth again on the burying-ground of her past. Nature is eternal, because no one has suffered like her. That's the glorious, mysterious, tragic and beautiful secret of nature. Did you follow me, gentlemen?

A lord Almost, your majesty.

Another Long live king Plato!

Henry Nay, Sir Arthur, my name is Henry. Never confuse me with greater kings.

Lord Pembroke Why, my lord, did you not offer your own name for your son instead of Edward? We would have loved to see another Henry like you as your successor.

Henry You should have conceived that idea when he was baptized, my lord Pembroke. Whether you like it or not you shall in the future have an Edward the Sixth, not another Henry the Sixth.

Sir James We don't follow, my liege.

Henry There have been better Edwards in history than Henries but unfortunately more Henries than Edwards. I try with my son to make up the inequality. But come, my lords, let's spur our horses on and be back at Windsor before dusk overtakes and seizes us all. Sir James, collect our princesses, – oh, here they come. *(enter Mary and Elizabeth)*

Elizabeth Mary twisted her ankle.

Henry I hope you didn't twist yours.

Elizabeth I certainly didn't. May we return here tomorrow?

Henry Why?

Elizabeth I found a lovely brook by the copse down there.

Henry But there are brooks everywhere.

Elizabeth None like this one.

Henry Are you sure?
Elizabeth Quite sure.
Henry Well then, we shall return tomorrow, for your sake, Elizabeth. Sit up, my princess! *(a lord alights and helps Elizabeth up on the King's horse.)* Are you well, princess Mary?
Mary Quite well, your majesty.
Henry Then off we go. Forward, my horse, my brave and excellent Sultan! *(gallops away before the others.)*
Sir James The King's humour rallies in the country.
Pembroke Let's hope he will ride out more often in the future.
Sir Arthur Let's hope so indeed. *(to Catherine)* May I escort you, madame?
Catherine You may indeed, Sir Arthur! *(They ride out, Catherine and Sir Arthur first. The others follow. Mary rests behind.)*
Mary Another day spent, another day lost, another day which might have been better had I been better. Perhaps I am a witch. God save me from such a destiny! Oh, if only I knew how to live! *(exit after the others.)*
(Hamnet and Ellinor reappear behind the tree.)
Ellinor It was the King.
Hamnet Yes, you were right.
Ellinor We have seen His Royal Majesty today, his family and Number Five. Will people believe us if we tell the story?
Hamnet I don't know. Perhaps they will. But we need not tell the truth.
Ellinor What shall we tell?
Hamnet I am good at inventing stories.
Ellinor So am I, but our stories have to correspond.
Hamnet Let's tell our tales in the pub together, both contributing to each other's relations as we go on. Thus we will make it seem like a whole.
Ellinor Hamnet, I adore you!
Hamnet And I worship you. But why did the King think only of witches and forget all about the good existence of elves?
Ellinor Witches are perhaps more dramatic, while elves suit us better, since they are more natural than dramatic and tragic.
Hamnet Our element is comedy.
Ellinor The King looks like a comic tragedy.
Hamnet All his marriages have been comic tragedies.
Ellinor So let us leave this scene and leave the King's comic tragedy and go to our natural comedy, where we belong.
(They walk out together, arms around each other.)

Scene 2. The Court.

One lord to another How goes the war with Scottish James?
The other I think the frequency of old Jamie's losses will kill him off soon.
The first The King is progressive, then?
The other No. He will die with the war unfinished, like all kings do. *(enter Catherine)*
The first Look.
The other At what?
The first The Queen.
Good morrow, your royal highness!
The other Have you had charming dreams this passed night?
Catherine I have indeed, my lords. *(goes over to lord Pembroke)*

Lord Pembroke, I presume? Will you escort me to the dining-hall?

Pembroke I certainly will, my royal queen. And from thence to practically anywhere.

Catherine You please me, my lord of Pembroke! *(they sail out)*

Lord Chichester The Queen has greatly graced our lord of Pembroke lately.

Lord Hastings So she has. Let us hope for some topic of conversation to come out of it.

Chichester It already has, my dear lord Hastings. The people long to see this wife deposed; they want their King to excel himself.

Suffolk My lords, unfortunately your conversation has touched my ear. The King loves his wife. Do not ruin his happiness by cultivating your ugly gossip and making it publicly known.

Chichester The Duke doesn't like us.

Hastings So we shall dislike him.

Chichester Is he married?

Hastings He is, but there is no more loyal man in England to his love and duties. But lo, here comes the King. *(enter Henry)*

Chichester He is getting fatter every day.

Hastings He would be more apt in the role of Falstaff.

Henry Good morrow, my court! Good morrow, everybody! Here I am again, your jolly old king, as majestic as ever! Be happy, my court, for my humour is pleasant today, and it may not be so forever. Laugh, my court, for happiness, like joy, festivity, pleasantry and fun is only to be laughed at! Oh, this damned belly-ache! How dreadfully it consumes my bowels! Oh! *(takes a chair)(Lords hurry to his aid.)*

Sir James Your Majesty, are you quite fit?

Henry (recovering) Certainly I am quite fit! What else! I have never loved a wife more indefatigably than this night, and never have I had a finer breakfast than this morning, so why shouldn't I be fit! My bowels play games with me, that's all. Where is Catherine?

Chichester I believe, your majesty, she was escorted to the dining-hall.

Henry To the dining-hall? Without me? By whom was she escorted?

Hastings By my lord of Pembroke, Sire.

Henry To the dining-hall, at once! She shall be escorted nowhere but by me!

Suffolk!

Suffolk Yes, my liege.

Henry Do you know anything about this?

Suffolk I hear much talk but observe only innocence.

Henry No need for jealousy then?

Suffolk Certainly not.

Henry Although she is young and I am so much older?

Suffolk Beware, your majesty. Young blood is without faith, but old hearts last the longer for their reliability in faith.

Henry What on earth do you mean?

Suffolk The only danger ahead is your own ungrounded jealousy.

Henry Thank you. Follow me!

Suffolk Certainly, your majesty. *(exeunt the King and Suffolk. The court begins chatting.)*

Catherine Parr I love this tragic king. He is old and weak and laughable, a poor crowned buffoon frustrated by many women, laughed at in secret and backbitten by all the world. If only he would marry the right lady one day, a lady that could take reasonable care of him! But men do not listen to women. That is their tragedy. They are rather misguided by themselves than guided by women, like this old fat ridiculous shadow of a man who could have been a King.

Norfolk Catherine Parr!

Catherine Parr Yes, your grace? What will your grace?
Norfolk What are you doing here at court?
Parr Just visiting my brother. Besides, I have been invited here by a friend.
Norfolk Have you met with the King?
Parr Not yet.
Norfolk I shall be happy to arrange a meeting between you, if you want to.
Parr Your grace, you are most generous.
Norfolk No, not generous, but courteous. I know your family to be a good and honest and reliable one since of old, and the court needs people like that to outdo occasional vermin.
Parr No comment, my lord.
Norfolk I would think not. Welcome, Catherine. (*touches her arm in friendship and takes courteously his leave.*)
Parr I am made happy. This Duke is an old friend of our family; how strange that he should meet me here and recognize me!
*(re-enter King, Catherine, Suffolk and Pembroke.
Princess Mary appears to the right of the scene.)*

Henry (quietly) What were you doing in the dining-hall? Haven't you eaten today?
Catherine No, I haven't.
Henry Why didn't you eat, then, in the dining-hall?
Catherine I had eaten already.
Henry In so brief a moment's time? Come, come, Catherine, you act suspiciously.
Catherine So do we all occasionally, your majesty, don't we?
Henry I guess we do. My dear assembled court, in a few moments we shall have a ball and thereafter an opulent banquet. What say you to that, my lords?
All Hurray!
Suffolk We rejoice, your majesty.
Pembroke So we do indeed.
Henry What do you mean by "we", Pembroke? But come now, all. We shall all give the construer of this play a reason for stating *exeunt all*, not that I know why, but we shall see! Come now, all! (*exeunt all, to the sound of music*)

Scene 3. The ball and the banquet.

Music whirls, wine is streaming, all are laughing, and gaiety rules the stage.

Henry Up and jump, my court! You haven't jumped enough yet! Whirl to the music! And let the wine decide the rhythm. Up, Catherine! Dance with lord Pembroke!
Catherine I would rather dance with you or with Sir Gordon Foxtrot.
Henry Dance with lord Pembroke, I said! I want to see you dance with lord Pembroke. (*to Suffolk*) If I try to dance I shall break my legs. (*sees Mary standing in a doorway, taking no part in the festivity*) Mary! What are you standing there for? Come, my princess, you are still young, fresh, beautiful and fair; you shall dance with the others.
Mary Please, father, leave me alone.
Henry You are strange, Mary. You have always been strange. I shall leave you alone if you wish, but only for the moment. (*to Suffolk*) She is ill, that girl. She has always been ill. She thinks too much of her mother. That's her illness. (*to Mary*) Mary, you should stop thinking of Catherine of Aragon.
*(Everything immediately comes to a standstill.
All stop and stare. All are petrified by the sound of the name.)*

Norfolk (whispering to a lord) That name has not been spoken since it vanished six years ago.

Henry Why are you all staring at me? Musicians, what happened to your music? Why are you so silent, all? *(rising from the table)* I read in your eyes fear and wonder. What is there to fear or to wonder at? Did I speak a magic word? Catherine of Aragon, what is that word to you? It's just a word. A dead word. Do you fear a word, my silly subjects? Do you wonder at my pronunciation of a dead word? I am not afraid of you. I am not afraid of anyone or anything, for my conscience is dead. It died with Sir Thomas More. He was the only one who dared to be any reasonable conscience in this Tudor establishment of only scandals and waste. What are you whispering about, my lords Chichester and Hastings? You are new at court, aren't you? Let's hear your voices! Speak up, gentlemen, I pray you! Let me hear your accusations, your objections to my life of lust, your demands for improvement of this degenerated monarch.

Catherine Parr (aside) Oh, this poor king!

Henry You are still staring at me in terror. Am I such an awkward embarrassment or such a good actor? Am I such a funny king? Why don't you all laugh if I am? Come now, laugh, my court! Laugh at a good joke! There is no better joke than an unkingly monarch. *(all begin to cheer again)* I like your delighting smiles. Dance again, ladies and gentlemen; music, return to the stage; without music no stage is alive. Fill all your chalices with wine, and empty them carefully. Abandon yourselves all to pleasure again; in brief, let's be merry. Mary! I want to dance with you. *(Mary is gone.)* Mary! Where is she gone? Then, my lady, *(turns to Catherine Parr)* I will dance with you.

Catherine Parr Me, Sir?

Henry Yes, Sir, you, Sir. If you Sir the King, I shall Sir you, madame. Come, on the floor, madame. *(He carries Catherine Parr away on the floor. All rejoice. Henry stops, fatigued.)* I am afraid, madame, that my limbs are too old for your company. You'll have to dance with someone younger than I. Bartholomew! *(Bartholomew comes in the middle.)* Dance with this pretty lady. The king needs a replacement, because his gout forbids him to carry away any more wives and court ladies. He can't deceive himself any more. My lady, I hope you'll excuse me.

Parr I certainly will, king Henry.

Henry Farewell, queen Incidental.

Catherine! Where is my one and only Queen gone?

Pembroke She is dancing, your majesty.

Henry With whom?

Pembroke With someone, probably.

Henry I would think so too. She wouldn't dance alone, would she, Pembroke, you genius? Farewell, court, for this moment. I'll just go out for a glass of water. *(stumbles out. He is quite exhausted.)*

Catherine Parr What was your name?

Bartholomew Bartholomew, madame.

Parr Oh yes, Bartholomew. You have a delightful king in this country.

Bartholomew Are you from abroad?

Parr Oh no. I just wanted to fill out the blank verse.

Bartholomew But there is no blank verse.

Parr Oh, isn't there? Well, as I said, you have a delightful king.

Bartholomew We have indeed.

Horace But we are afraid there isn't much left of him.

Parr But he is grander than ever.

Horace That's just the problem. The larger he grows, the emptier the inside, the hollower his life, and the shorter his remaining distance.

Parr Is he aware of it?

Bartholomew He tries to conceal it by his flesh and fails pathetically.

Parr So do all people that grow fat. But his inside will save him.

Horace I hope you are right, madame.

(The dancing continues, the lights gradually go out, the music retires with the light, and the stage ends in darkness.)

Scene 4. Henry solus.

Henry How do you cope with tiredness? When you are flung off the lovely merry-go-round, how do you do to get in again? I don't know. Besides, I'm weary of it. I am weary of all joy, of poisonous wine, of my eternally swelling belly. I can't love any more. I can't drink much any more. I try to love my wife, but she is disgusted with me. What am I to do? Does anyone know how one's youth is brought back? If there is anyone who knows how age is enlivened, I will offer him my crown. *(takes off his crown)* Is there anyone? No? Then I'll put it on again. It chafed my head once; now I am grown so thick-headed that not an axe could possibly tickle it. I wish I could love my wife. I wish I weren't old.

Once I rode, wrestled, fought and excelled everyone in all sports. Once I bothered to study Plato, Plutarch, Machiavel and the driest of them all, Aristotle. Those days are gone now, and only Martin Luther vies with me in languishing stagnation: in addition we are swelling both in equal fatness. Those days were my best when we two fought and never tired of it intellectually. Politics forced me to accept his more concrete and carnal coarse philosophy, and that became the end of all the spiritual progress of our age. We were both swallowed up in the most human bog of self-complacency and lazy comfortableness, which both must lead to inhumanity and ignorance, which though the entire humankind most enthusiastically does applaud, since that's the broad way made for ordinary people, the incumbent mass of death's majority, the vulgar commonness, which dominating course has been my own in spiritual apathy all since my little Jenny died.

(enter Mary)

Mary, what are you doing here? Aren't you having fun with the rest of my kingdom?

Mary I don't know how to have fun.

Henry You are not serious, Mary. Certainly I have seen you laugh sometimes, Mary.

Mary Laughter is an expression; joy is a feeling. They are two different things. But that is not what I came here to discuss.

Henry What came you to discuss?

Mary Mother Catherine asked me to come.

Henry What does she want?

Mary She is waiting for you in the hall. I don't know what she wants.

Henry Katie! *(exit in haste towards the hall)*

Mary There he went, my old father, the murderer of my mother. May God serve him now with what he has earned. *(exit in the opposite direction)*

Scene 5. The hall.

(Catherine and Pembroke are alone. They rest in each other's arms.

Soon they begin to kiss and fondle each other. This goes on for quite some while before Henry enters, without at first seeing them.)

Henry This is where Mary said my wife would be waiting for me. But where is she? I see her nowhere. Kate, my blessed darling, whom I would love so passionately

if I could, where are you? My pet, my pretty fairy! She answers me not. Maybe she isn't here. But she must be here, for Mary doesn't ordinarily lie.

(calling) Kate!

(Kate and Pembroke are interrupted by his calling. The King suddenly discovers them. Catherine is all dishevelled.)

Ha! So there you are! (Pembroke rises instantly.) There you are, Pembroke! I was just looking for you! Have you seen my wedded lady Catherine Howard lately? I expected her to be here. Where is she?

Pembroke (stammering and pointing at Catherine) She tried to seduce me!

Henry I am not interested in your petty affairs with dirty sluts, Pembroke. What I wanted was to know where my honourable Queen is.

Pembroke (still pointing at Catherine, stammering desperately) It is she!

Henry Surely, Pembroke, you don't want me to believe, that this dirty disorganized whore, with which you are playing, and which you undoubtedly have found in the heart of dirtiest London, is the Queen of England, my wife and worshipped lady? (Pembroke faints.)

Catherine (trembling) Forgive me, great Henry.

Henry Forgive what? I know you not. Isn't this kind of work your business? Hence, unroyal quean! You do not belong in Westminster. I have never seen you in my life before, and I shall never see you again! Hence! (He drags her up violently and kicks her, felling her to the floor.) Who are you by the way? A woman? A human creature? An animal creature? A fraud? No, you are not even a fraud. You are the lowest kind of living being: you are nothing but dirt. (spits upon her body) Catherine, I hereby leave you to the rats. (exit, after one last look)

(Catherine lies sobbing for a while. By and by she sits up, wet with tears, tries to organize her hair, and so on, all the while crying.)

Catherine (finally) Forgive me! Forgive me! Forgive me! Forgive me! Forgive me! Boohoo! (crying desperately)

(Lord Pembroke rises, collects himself, and walks out, as if nothing had happened, without even noticing Catherine's prostrate figure.)

(Suddenly enter princess Elizabeth.)

Elizabeth I heard some voices from here.

(Suddenly enter guards. Catherine looks up.)

Catherine! (tries to run to her, but is stopped by the guards.)

First guard This is no place for you, child. Run along!

Elizabeth But she is my second mother!

First guard The greater the reason why you should run along. (leads her out.) Come now, be a good girl. (locks the door after her, which she begins pounding.)

Second guard By order of His Majesty the King you are hereby charged with the severe crime of adultery. Catherine Howard, Queen of England, rise, when you are being spoken to! (She will not.) Take her out!

Catherine I am not guilty of what I unwillingly neither performed nor wanted!

First guard Tell that to the dogs. The King himself is your prosecutor, and he does not need any witnesses. I am afraid, my lady, that nothing more can save you now. (She is forced up and taken away.)

(The poundings of princess Elizabeth continue still, until they eventually calm down and cease altogether.)

Scene 6. The Tower.

Catherine Howard in her prison. She is praying.

Catherine (looking up) Shall I be saved? Will the King relent? Is there any hope for me? Oh, Queen of Queens, please help the most wretched queen in history! What shall I

pray? What shall I offer God to make him rescue me? O death! I fear thee! I hate thee and damn thee for all that you are! Death! Cursed, dreadful, horrible pit of nothing into which all must fall in the end! What shall I do to avoid thee? I would do anything. Anything! I defy thee, death! God, if thou art real, free me from the illusion of death! For if death is real, then there can be no God. Life, life, fickle glimmering life, what art thou? Why do you have to take back what you give all babies and mothers? What did I do to get punished with the loss of life before I had had time to apply it? I was not born to become a queen. The King made me a queen. I am an ordinary girl, who wanted to grow a common and respectable woman, but cruel king Harry altered my life's happy course. Cruel king Harry! Thy cruelty shall live in people's and all women's minds for ever and ever and ever! King Harry is death! England, beware of king Harry, for he is death! O death, I fear thee so! Boohoo! (falls to the floor, crying desperately.)

(Enter Cranmer, Suffolk and guards.)

Cranmer Look at her girlish little figure! So young and so guilty! I never saw a woman like that. Don't you feel, Suffolk, like a devirginator when you behold this frail young woman in this desolate prison like this?

Suffolk I do indeed, your honour.

Cranmer I wish I could help her in some way, but even her powerful uncle the Duke of Norfolk can do nothing, and I am only a religious implement in the steadfast hand of our bombastic king Henry. I was here once before, you know, then in the business of comforting the late Anne Boleyn. Alas, she was not as abject a creature as this one is. She remained a lady until the end. Excuse me, your royal highness...

Catherine (looking up) What do you want? (glances wildly at them)

Cranmer Take courage, my lady, and rise from this dusty floor. What makes you wallow in so abject a state?

Catherine The King brought me thus.

Cranmer Hush, girl. You know very well the King didn't. You alone did, for no one else has been here but you.

Catherine I am mad; that's why I crawl in this dust. Did you not hear me scream presently? I scream every day. I will scream every day until I die. I hate nothing except death. Wheeeeeeeeeee! (suddenly runs up, screaming, and makes for the open prison door. She is mercilessly stopped by the guards.)

Cranmer Easy, easy, guards! Remember that she is a woman. We are not here to harm you, my dear child. Comfort thee. Calm yourself. Take it easy. Have you not prayed for mercy?

Catherine I do every morning, every evening, every night and every day.

Cranmer Then mercy is sure to come. Shall I keep you company? Will my learned prayers be of extra comfort to you?

Catherine I doubt your honesty, archbishop. I can not think a man of any good. You surely are both stinking with the sole desire to take me by force here on the middle of the floor in safety without witnesses in order to before I'm dead get out of me a last chance of some pleasure. Isn't that the only cause of women's lives: the dirty pleasures of men?

Cranmer My lady, you commit a serious mistake. My love is only for my God.

Catherine What God? There is no God of love.

Cranmer There is a God omnipotent in the most quiet and mysterious of ways. He is an element more subtle, fine, essential and impalpable than air, more exquisite and more invisible than any scientist or alchemist is able to explain or trace, but all the same his ether is ubiquitous wherever there is life and therefore even here. If this ethereal substance did not rule the world, there would not ever have existed anything called life. But through this ether everywhere, in every sea and atmosphere and earth, God recreates all life forever. This God is my life and yours, and through

his power, which is love alone, am I with you in here in order to assuage your sufferings.

Catherine Your love of God is your excuse for hating and humiliating all humanity. Your love of God enables you to partake in the execution of the scapegoats and the victims for the King whenever this may suit the King's capriciousness. You are no better than a pagan wizard or an ancient high priest claiming human sacrifices for his god of blood-thirst and perversion! I wish you both to hell with all authorities of England! For my part there is no God but death!

Suffolk She is demented.

Cranmer I fear so, yes. But we must understand it. So young!

Suffolk How old?

Cranmer Almost nineteen.

Suffolk And the axe is waiting for her neck. Methinks this England is a bit too harsh in power of initiative and dramatization. The effect means more to us than the result.

Catherine What are you staring at, animals? I hate all men! Phew! (*spits*) Out, devils! Give all my hate to king Henry! Out, I say, or I'll vomit!

Suffolk We can not speak with her.

Cranmer No, we can't. But we have to fulfil what we came for. (*to Catherine*) Calm yourself, my child, just for one moment!

Catherine Try to be calm yourself, when you're next for the gallows.

Cranmer We came to give you the truth.

Catherine I know the truth. What is it more than death?

(*Cranmer gives a sign to the guard. The guard brings forth a document.*)

Guard Catherine Howard, former wife of king Henry VIII, has been tried and found guilty of gross adultery. She is to be beheaded within the walls of the Tower on the morning of the...

Catherine (shouting) My death is God's death!

Cranmer Let's leave her.

Suffolk I am sick.

Cranmer Guards, proceed ye. I am afraid there is nothing more we can do.

(*Suffolk and guards go out.*)

Farewell, wretched queen, and may God have mercy upon you.

Catherine God has no mercy with any woman. He is a man himself, and he has ordained manhood to everlasting seduction of womanhood to death for all eternity. He doesn't give a damn about women, he has never cared for them, and he has never understood them.

Cranmer My lady, I forgive your blasphemies.

Catherine My bishop, you are the blaspheming part who imagines that an innocent victim can be comforted. Before the doomed, all speech of life and God is nothing but the grossest of all blasphemies.

Cranmer I fail to understand that.

Catherine Do you? When one day you are yourself tormented unto death by hypocritical comforters acting in the name of holiest religion as a pure excuse for death and thereby only make your pain and death the worse, archbishop, even you will understand.

Cranmer If that is a prophecy, I quake at your infernal cunning.

Catherine It is more certain than a prophecy, archbishop. Comfort yourself instead of me, if you have the power.

Cranmer (shaken) Farewell, my poor young lady. (*leaves.*)

(*As the door is closed behind him, darkness promptly falls on the stage.*)

Scene 7.

Elizabeth What has happened to Catherine?
Mary Be comforted, Elizabeth. Our mother for a year is dead.
Elizabeth Dead? Why is she dead?
Mary Why? Because she was Catherine.
Elizabeth Why is she dead because she was Catherine?
Mary You ask too many questions, Elizabeth. When you grow older you'll understand the vanity of asking them all.
Elizabeth What do you mean?
Mary Nothing.
Elizabeth But why is she dead? What does it mean?
Mary Go and play, Elizabeth. You'll be happier that way.
Elizabeth But...
Mary (aside) She has emptied her mind. Now she is satisfied.
Elizabeth But I will find out all about why Catherine had to die. *(exit)*
Mary Brave girl. She will be struck by the truth of her own mother's death first. *(enter Catherine Parr)*
Catherine Isn't it a wonderful weather today?
Mary Where? What did you say? Oh, lady Catherine! Forgive me! I did not hear your entering.
Catherine I thought you were contemplating the weather, standing thus by the window.
Mary Oh no, I was merely thinking of life.
Catherine Are you still troubled by Catherine Howard's death?
Mary What woman isn't?
Catherine (comforting her) I am not.
Mary Have you had a talk with the King yet?
Catherine I have.
Mary Will you return to the country now?
Catherine No. I will stay here.
Mary Why? Has anything happened?
Catherine Nothing much.
Mary You have a secret.
Catherine None which everyone does not know.
Mary Tell me what somebody like me doesn't know.
Catherine Might it be my age?
Mary No lady's age is a well-kept secret.
Catherine Might it be that I am engaged?
Mary Even I have been engaged, but that was no secret.
Catherine Might it be that I am engaged to the King?
Mary Lady Catherine! You are not serious!
Catherine Do you joke about serious matters?
Mary I can not believe it. I refuse to believe it. *(calling)* Elizabeth! Elizabeth must know. No one will be more elated by this than she. Elizabeth! *(exit in search of Elizabeth)*
Catherine I am a happy woman. I loved this king from the beginning, and I will love him to the end. All he ever needed was a plain woman to take care of him. He has found her now, and she has no doubts whatsoever that she is his last Catherine. *(enter Elizabeth and Mary)*
Elizabeth Lady Catherine! How happy I am to learn that you shall be our next second mother!

Catherine And how happy I shall be to take finally care of ye as your first mother. I will not be second mother to anyone, but indeed I shall be a simple mother to all, and especially to your father.

Elizabeth Do you know any good tales, lady Catherine?

Catherine I do indeed. Which one will you hear?

Elizabeth The one about the Ogres in the Black Forest.

Catherine I shall relate it tonight, if you behave for the rest of the day.

Elizabeth That I promise.

Catherine You are a good girl, Elizabeth. But, young ladies, thinking of the weather, have you been out at all today?

Elizabeth No, not at all.

Catherine Let's go out then, eh, shall we? The sun is shining, and it would be a shame to let her shine out there alone. (*exeunt*)

Act IV Scene 1.

(*The King solus. Enter Norfolk.*)

Henry How goes my fleet, Norfolk?

Norfolk Your majesty, it is becoming a pride to England indeed.

Henry That gladdens me, Norfolk, for that is what I want it to be. I have always longed for the sea, Norfolk. I love the sea. And I believe all Englishmen like me have the same longing feeling in their breasts for the singular endlessness of the sea. I want all Englishmen to set out on the sea, Norfolk. That is why I am building this fleet, and when I am dead, Norfolk, for I shall be dead soon, the fleet shall be continued. The fleet shall be continued forever, Norfolk!

Norfolk Naturally, your majesty.

Henry For, Norfolk, there is no crueller foe than the sea. You build ships only to cast them to the foe. She is cruel, Norfolk. And that is why the fleet shall be continued on forever, for we will not submit! Nay, Norfolk, we shall not submit to nature or the sea. Not ever, Norfolk!

Norfolk Of course, your majesty.

Henry (rising) Take me to Bristol.

Norfolk Now, your majesty?

Henry Yes, Norfolk. I want to see this fleet of mine. (*Norfolk helps Henry out.*)

Catherine (outside) Where do you think you are going?

Henry (outside) Only to Bristol.

Catherine Bristol? Never! You are going nowhere, Henry! You aren't well yet. If you go for a journey now you'll catch another cold and be indisposed again for another month! (*Henry and Norfolk enter again where they left. They walk backwards, being driven back by Catherine, who is entering also.*)

You shall stay at Westminster, Henry, where you are safe and well, until your health is definitely restored. And I will make you some toddy. (*exit*)

Henry (complaining) What a merciless tyrant she is!

Norfolk (jokingly) Why don't you just chop off her head?

Henry Nay, Norfolk, those days are gone. Instead one day times will find it proper to behead some royalty, and I regret that it will never be myself. Besides, I need a tyrant like this Catherine to keep an eye on me, to soothe my painful memories of my horrible life and dreadful misbehavings. After all, Norfolk, you'll have to admit that I once was a graver tyrant than even she is now. And her tyranny, besides, is only beneficial. We shall go to Bristol another day, Norfolk, when Catherine allows us to. (*enter a messenger*)

But here is a messenger. My Scottish messenger, I believe. Speak, messenger. What news?

Messenger Majesty, I bring some tragic news.
Henry I am prepared for the worst. Have we lost another battle?
Messenger No, your majesty, but his majesty the king of Scotland is dead.
Henry Is that all?
Messenger Yes, your majesty.
Henry Then that's all. You can go.
Messenger Yes, your majesty. *(exit)*
Henry King James is dead. Did you hear that, Norfolk? He finally broke under his burden. Too many wars, too many misfortunes, and too much of Scotland finally broke the old king. What say you to that, Norfolk?
Norfolk Who will succeed to his throne?
Henry You are quite right, Norfolk. I quite forgot about that. Messenger! Come back! We forgot something! *(re-enter messenger)*
Messenger Yes, your majesty?
Henry Who will succeed his majesty the dead king of Scotland?
Messenger His daughter, your majesty, princess Mary.
Henry How old is she?
Messenger She is merely a new-born baby, your majesty. *(exit)*
Henry What say you to that, Norfolk? My old Scottish foe is dead and has left his sorrows to a baby.
Norfolk You might conquer Scotland now, my King.
Henry No. That would be a foul thing to do. I will leave my wars to my son. When he is old enough to war, Mary Stuart will be old enough to defend herself. But the best prospect would be if they married each other and united our irksome nation. No enemy can visit Britain, but our constant trouble will be ourselves. If we constantly fight each other, whether we call ourselves Scotsmen, Irishmen, Welshmen, Cornishmen or Gaels, we will never emerge as a prominent nation but constantly remain no better than Turks or catholics. In that case we will ever be defenceless against barbarity. On the other hand, we should be capable of reaching some prominence, our language being the clearest, simplest, most logical and most expressive in Europe next to Italian. But there is no hope for Italy, that part of the world being hopelessly bound in catholic superstition. So, Norfolk, I end my wars with parsimonious Scotland and leave that rugged land in peace.
Norfolk You are noble, my king.
Henry No. I am just an ordinary gentleman. By the way, I would like to see my son. Edward! *(enter Edward)* Edward, my son, how do you do?
Edward Well, father, I haven't coughed today yet.
Henry That's good to hear, my son. I hope you will never cough again. *(Edward coughs.)* But what is it I hear? Away, my son! I will speak with you again when you feel better. *(exit Edward, coughing)* Poor fellow. What do the physicians say?
Norfolk They hide the fact well that they are worried.
Henry That grieves me. Poor Jane! Alas, wicked destiny! For the sake of an heir I sacrificed my only decent and truly devoted wife, and this is how destiny awards me: an heir incurably sick! Alas! But that's how the world goes. Nothing remains in the end but frustrations.
Catherine (outside) What did you say, Henry? *(entering)* Am I not a decent and truly devoted wife?
Henry You are indeed, Catherine.
Catherine Why then did you speak of your only decent and truly devoted wife as if she was long since dead?
Henry It wasn't about you I spoke, my dear.
Catherine Who was it then?

Henry Forgive me, Catherine, and forget it. I was merely mumbling in my beard.

Catherine I hope so indeed! *(exit)*

Henry She is like a hawk, Norfolk. Whenever she sees a rat on my tongue she dives down to it with horrible decision and consumes it. And her ear never abandons my speech for the faintest moment. She is cruel to me frequently, but I don't bother, for I am old. Age does not mind much about cruelty, for the aged knows that however cruel the world is, none's cruelty has excelled his own, for his personal cruellest of crimes is the very worst of all: he has withheld himself from living. You are almost old yourself, Norfolk. Do you agree?

Norfolk Almost.

Henry A good answer, Norfolk. You'll answer for that in heaven. *(enter Catherine with a cup)* Ah, here comes my toddy.

Catherine Drink it whilst it's hot. *(gives the cup to Henry, and then exit)*

Henry A pleasant perfume finds my nostrils. Do you envy me, Norfolk?

Norfolk I do, Sir.

Henry Then you shall drink with me. Catherine!

Catherine *(entering)* Yes?

Henry Make a cup for Norfolk also. He is almost as old and spent as I am. Won't you, Catherine?

Catherine I will if you please. *(exit)*

Henry There, Norfolk. You will be rewarded for your envy. Few men are. *(tastes his toddy, coughs)*

Norfolk Is it hot?

Henry It's a little too hot, yes. I shall have to warm my fingers with the cup before I warm my heart with its contents. Here she comes, Norfolk.
(enter Catherine with a toddy for Norfolk)

Catherine There you are, my duke of Norfolk.

Norfolk I thank you, lady Catherine, sincerely for your benevolence.
(exit Catherine)

Henry Do not flirt with her, Norfolk!

Norfolk But I do not, your majesty.

Henry You had a gleam in your eye when you looked upon her. Such a gleam is dangerous.

Norfolk You must be joking, your majesty.

Henry I never joke except on serious matters.

Norfolk But I assure you...

Henry And I believe you. Come now, drink your toddy.

Norfolk Cheers, your majesty.

Henry And good health to you, Norfolk. *(they drink)*
(enter Catherine suddenly)

Catherine Does it taste good?
(both gentlemen get the stuff in their throats.)

Henry and Norfolk Cough! Cough!

Catherine Oh, I am sorry. I shouldn't have interrupted you. Please forgive my disturbance. *(exit)*

Henry *(recovering gradually)* Is she gone?

Norfolk *(recovering)* I think so. Yes, she is.

Henry She quite startled me.

Norfolk And so she did with me.

Henry It's not easy to be a husband these days.

Norfolk It never was.

Henry You see what I mean. After five marriage failures, I finally succeeded in marrying the worst of them. And still she is the best.

Norfolk At least you haven't been too unlucky. Whatever objections your wives might have had against your sports, one of them is still alive, and she loves you after all.

Henry But let's drink up now and then be off for our afternoon sleep.

Norfolk Don't tell me you are tired.

Henry I am always tired. Who wouldn't be after having consumed five wives and can't get through the sixth?

Norfolk Just don't complain while you still have her. I'll join you in your beauty sleep.

Henry Good, my friend. Let's dream together of the love we still have somewhere to look forward to.

Norfolk A good idea, your majesty. *(they drink)*

Scene 2. The Court.
(the court is assembled)

Sir Arthur Where is the King today? The court is not the same without him.

Lord Hastings No one is the same without him.

Norfolk He will come, I assure you all. He has to get dressed, that's all. The greater his flesh, the more time it takes dressing.

Sir Arthur Is he happy in the company of his wife?

Hastings No, but they say she is happy in the company of him.

Sir Arthur That is something unique.

Hastings Yes, isn't it? I bet she is his first happy queen.

Sir Arthur As long as he doesn't suffer for it, all is well.

Hastings But concerning his matrimonial joy we know nothing.

Sir Arthur That is true. May we learn some news therefrom soon!

Hastings Yes, I am eager at it too.

Chichester Hallo, my lords! How do you like the new queen?

Hastings We all like her, for she seems to last.

Chichester Is it true that she has mastered the King?

Sir Arthur It might well be true, for the King hasn't been angry since he married.

Chichester Where is he, by the way?

Sir Arthur We all wonder.

Suffolk *(aside)* There is one thing I dislike about this court. It's so unnatural, unhuman and civilized. It's so artificial and absurd an institution. But the lords and ladies in it enjoy it well, and that's the point. But yet, they all seem to be like puppets, like insipid actors on a stage following no definite parts. They are spiritless all and care only about the course of the stream, as if mainstream was the only choice, ignoring the fact that only dead fish float mainstream. None of them is a personal individual. In the old days, when Sir Thomas More and Cardinal Wolsey dominated all, there was none at court who was not an individual. *(enter Bartholomew)* Yes, Bartholomew?

Bartholomew The King is sick.

Suffolk Sick again? Of what, this time?

Bartholomew No one knows, your grace.

Suffolk Then it could be serious. Does it seem to be serious?

Bartholomew Quite serious, your honour.

Suffolk *(aside)* The King ill? I never expected that could happen. It sounds like an impossible absurdity. The most unserious monarch in the world fallen seriously ill – it sounds like a paradox.

Hark ye all! The King is indisposed today and will probably not appear at court. So forgive me if I retire. (*retires*)

Hastings The King ill?

Chichester It sounds like an absurdity.

Sir Arthur He has had too much to drink, no doubt.

Horace My lords, if you forgive me, the King is not ill from gluttony or misbehaviour. This time he is ill.

Chichester You amaze us, courtier. What do you mean?

Hastings No use asking him. He is gone.

Chichester He is like a sneaking weasel, that fellow: he pops out from nowhere, frightens us with his sharp and cunning eye, to disappear without a trace before you have had time to mark his words.

Hastings Look! Here comes the Duke of Suffolk entering once more! (*enter Suffolk*)

Suffolk My lords! Attention, please! The fact is now established, that the King is seriously ill. He asks you all to pray for him tonight. (*exit*)

Horace (*aside*) The old wine-barrel of the king is finally exhausted. (*exit*)

(*The court gradually dissolves under wild gossip and much excitement.*)

Scene 3. Enter Elizabeth.

Elizabeth My father. They say he is dying. Why, then, may I not see him? Why is everyone so odd nowadays? (*exit*)

(*enter Mary*)

Mary The old fat goat is finally lying on his death-bed. Will I be Queen some day? That is a probability, for little brother Edward is as weak and as sick as his dying father. (*exit*)

(*enter Elizabeth and Catherine from opposite directions*)

Elizabeth Lady Catherine! (*she rushes to her and is embraced*) My father! How is my father?

Catherine Calm yourself, Elizabeth. He will see you anon. Come! (*exeunt*)

Suffolk (*entering*) The King's last minutes are hastening away. Will princess Mary take over one day? I fear her more than I ever feared king Henry, for she is a catholic! May prince Edward's constant illness leave him in peace, and may God preserve his life for at least an ordinary man's age! (*exit*)

(*enter Suffolk on one side, Catherine and Elizabeth on the other*)

Suffolk My lady, are you not with the King?

Catherine I went to fetch princess Elizabeth. Henry wanted her being to please him once more.

Suffolk Come then, but hurry on! (*exeunt to the right*)

Scene 4. The King's bed-chamber.

Henry My soul is troubled. All my life I have lived for betterment, for my own betterment and for the betterment of the environment. I have tried to nourish my spirit by seeing the world improving, but now my spirit is dead. Never in history has England stood on a higher level, and neither has the rest of the world for that matter. But what am I? Why does this sight not gladden me, which I have lived for and hoped for all my life? I leave a splendid nation for my son to take over; why am I not pleased by this? Why can't you reach pleasure when you can seek it?

My spirit is dead. There is nothing left in me but memories. There is nothing left in life for me to do but to bid farewell. What would I do if I suddenly were young

again? Would I ride again to war? Would I marry again? No. I do not think I would. For the spirit, being once dead, is always dead, whether its embodiment is dead or alive, young or old, fresh or rotten. My spirit is used, my life is consumed; death, I wait for thee with stalwart indifference, for your approach I now know is as natural as my entire life has been.

Archbishop!

Cranmer Yes, your grace.

Henry Hasn't Catherine returned yet?

Cranmer No, Sire.

Henry And where is Mary and Elizabeth? Have they already forgotten their wicked father, the killer of their mothers?

Cranmer I am positive they will not, your majesty. *(retires to his chair)*

Henry Oh, a horribly defective father I have been! That is the only thing I will regret unto my death. If they were here, Mary and Elizabeth, I would apologize. I apologize... *(faints)*

Cranmer (to the King's physician) How is he?

Physician He is weak and beyond all hope for recovery but will not die yet.

Cranmer Give me notice when he awakes. *(enter Catherine and Elizabeth)*

Catherine (to Cranmer) He is still alive, I hope?

Cranmer He is, my lady. He just asked for you.

Elizabeth Father!

Cranmer Hush, my child. You can not play with your father now.

(Elizabeth buries her head in the bed. Catherine seats herself beside her husband.)

Where is prince Edward?

Catherine He is on his way.

(enter Edward with nurse. Behind him his uncle the Duke of Somerset.)

Henry (awaking) Catherine!

Catherine Take it easy, my dearest. They are all here.

Henry I see not Mary. Where is Mary?

Catherine Mary will be coming soon.

Henry I want to... apologize... to her... *(dies)*

Catherine Henry!

Physician The King is dead. *(Catherine cries bitterly.)*

Somerset (to Edward) You are the King now, boy.

Edward But... my father...

Somerset He is dead.

Cranmer Yes, the King is dead. May God deign to receive his not altogether pure but neither altogether graceless soul.

All Amen.

Catherine Nurse, take Elizabeth out.

Nurse Yes, my lady.

(All go out save Catherine, who remains by the side of her husband.)

Scene 5.

Somerset The King is dead. Long live the King! *(all hail Edward)*

Edward Nay, hail me not. I am but a weak creature. My health forbids me good guidance of you, the almighty God will probably not permit me to remain long in my office, but despite all complications brought on my state I shall do my best, and, with the support of my uncle and Protector here, my mother's loved brother, I will at least try to be good as a prince. *(all cheer and hail)*

Somerset The archbishop of Canterbury has a message to bring.

Cranmer My lords, my people, my ladies and honourable gentlemen, we have all lost a great and majestic king, perhaps not universally loved, but indeed universally acknowledged. His loss is irreparable, but his work lingers and will be carried on. I beg you all to remember this year, this occasion, this king's decisive death, for he was not an ordinary king. He was a king of William the Conqueror's kind, more related to the valiant Richard Cordelion than to his own father, who prepared his course. Remember him, gentlemen, recall to your minds now and then the moments he spoke unto you and graced you, the moments he honoured you and his country, the moments he made those impressions which aren't easy to forget and which I believe never will be forgotten. Keep him alive in your minds, do it for the sake of future generations, for I sincerely believe that no one possibly could throw him less than a joy to remember. Let your children laugh at his banquets, tame those ladies that must by the stories of his marriages, and conquer the seas by continuing his finest work: his act of building ships. Ladies and gentlemen, we have all lost a monarch whose like we shall never see again. That, in brief, was the essence of my message.

Young king Edward, who are not crowned yet but who soon shall be, thee I command with the authority of your father's church to learn simply what your father ultimately learned: to be a good king. You learn it best by studying your father.

Finally, my Lord Protector, I turn unto you. An era has passed, and a new one is approaching. What it will be like depends on you and me, and the King, when he is ready for his task. I hope no strife will break up England, like it tragically has done so many times before; that we shall understand each other without embarrassment or any misunderstanding, and, above all, without any withheld arguments. For the first step towards enmity is taken when you withhold important information; automatically its voidness waxes until it becomes a cancer and kills the state. The avoidance of that, my dear Protector, is one of our many common duties, and personally I see no reason why we shouldn't accomplish them. I hope you are of the same mind.

That, my lords, ladies, gentlemen and secretaries of state, was all I had in mind. I hope you could follow me. (*retires*)

Somerset We are touched by your speech, your grace, especially by the beginning. I do entirely agree with you on all your points of discourse and think that nothing shall be able to split our friendly cooperation. Together with our sovereign here I take it for granted that we shall safely, like a Roman triumvirate, carry our nation across whatever seas of troubles and storms of fights that might expect us, and it's my sincerest belief that what's awaiting us is even better than the past. Hark, oh gentlemen! Sing ye the King's praise, and the praise of our country. Sing ye...

All Hurray! Hurray! Hurray! God save the King, safeguard him and maintain him, for many fruitful years to come! God save the King! Hurray! (*All cheer.*)

Suffolk Nothing remains now but music to lead all this wonderful spectacle into a merry dance.

A lord Musicians! Take your positions! Ladies and gentlemen, prepare yourselves for a ball! (*Music. People gradually find partners and dance.*)

Good, my lords! Let's celebrate the day, the sunshine, the new age, spring, nature, everything, and our princely king. Long live king Edward the Sixth!

All Long live king Edward the Sixth!

(*Edward leaves the stage, coughing, with Somerset and others, while the dancing whirls on.*)

End of Part Two.

Some Queens of England

or

The Tudor Comedy

Part Three

Characters of Part Three :

King Edward VI
Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset
Thomas Seymour, his brother, admiral
Duke of Northumberland
Guilford, his son
Jane Grey, his daughter-in-law
Princess Elizabeth
Her maid
Catherine Parr, married to Thomas Seymour
Princess Mary
Her maid
A page
Lord William Cecil
Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury
Lord Reginald Pole
King Philip II of Spain
Horace, an old attendant
A courtier
Peter,
Patrick,
Sir Arthur, and
Sir Charles, citizens of London
Lords, soldiers and guards

The stage is England from 1548 to 1558.

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PART THREE

Act I scene 1. Westminster

(King Edward sits on his throne; Somerset by his side.)

Edward But why may I not see my sisters?

Somerset They do not want to see you, your majesty.

Edward I can not understand that. Do they no longer love me? Are they able to see me if they would want to? Answer me, uncle!

Somerset Certainly there is nothing to compel their absence. Nothing stops them from seeing you but themselves.

Edward I fail to understand them. They loved me always, and they know my love for them is without the faintest impurity. They took care of me so well at my father's death, and there was none whose presence at my coronation was more welcome. Send for them, uncle, I pray. My loneliness of office is hard to carry without them.

Somerset I shall send for them, your majesty. *(exit)*

(re-enter Somerset with Northumberland and Jane Grey.)

I met this duke and lady outside your very door, your majesty. I believe the duke of Northumberland has come to present lady Jane Grey to your majesty.

Northumberland So I have, majesty. This is your cousin Jane Grey.

Edward Are you my cousin, Jane Grey?

Jane Grey I certainly am.

Northumberland Kneel to him, Jane.

Jane Grey Humbly I commend myself to my liege and royal sovereign. *(kneels)*

Northumberland Do you like her, prince?

Edward Since she is my cousin I shall love her as my own sister. Rise, lady Jane, and stay at my court. I want to play with you.

Northumberland If your majesty pleases, that is impossible.

Edward Why?

Northumberland She is married, and her husband is awaiting her at Oxford.

Edward Bring him here some day, your lordship. I would like to meet him as fain as I would have your son's beloved stay.

Northumberland I promise your majesty you shall see him anon. Come now, Jane Grey. You have been presented. *(They begin to go out.)*

Jane Grey May I see the King again?

Northumberland You certainly may whenever you are humoured thereto.

Jane Grey He was the nicest king I've ever met. *(exeunt)*

Edward Are you still here, my uncle? I thought you were going to bring my sisters to my side.

Somerset So I am, your majesty. *(exit)*

Edward My uncle is all I have. I fear him most of all men, and yet I have to turn to him for guidance, for he is the only one I know who cares for me, or at least seems to care for me, since I appear to be forgotten by my sisters. Elizabeth and Mary, cruel alienated sisters, so blissful and comforting company once, and now so bitterly and grievously disunited from me; what has come between us? When shall I see you again? Will you ever stem the flow of my pungent tears again? Shall I ever again laugh because of your soothing company? I have never known any angels but you. Return, oh, return, sweet sisters! Your miserable king and little brother is coughing, waiting for you to assuage his sufferings by merely letting him enjoy your presence once more before he dies.

(retires, being hardly able to remain on his legs.)

Scene 2.

Elizabeth But why may I not see my brother?

Maid The mighty duke of Somerset forbids you.

Elizabeth What right has he to forbid me paying a visit to my own King, who in addition happens to be my little brother, and who undoubtedly needs my assistance in his difficult state as a monarch?

Maid He says the King is too weak to see you and wants no one's presence save his uncle's.

Elizabeth The duke lies. And I am worried. Has Mary been to see him since his coronation?

Maid I know not, princess. Mary is a catholic and not very popular with the dukes at present. I think she stays at...

Elizabeth Of course she hasn't been to see her brother; how stupid of me to believe such a thing. Poor Edward! If only there was something I could do to reach him. I know he needs me! I know it! (*enter Catherine Parr*)

Oh, Catherine, my mother, help me to the court! I must see the King! The tyrant the duke of Somerset secludes him from the world, from his people and even from his family. The King will die if I may not see him. Catherine, o sweet my second mother, is there anything you can do?

Catherine No, my child, there is nothing I can do.

Elizabeth But are you not married to the Lord Protector's brother, the lord Seymour?

Catherine He disdains me, Elizabeth, and he is opposed to his brother the duke. He is a strange solitary man who wants to be alone with his capriciousness. He will hate me any day, and he hates his brother; there is nothing, Elizabeth, I can do to ease this terrible condition of life at the moment.

Elizabeth Your words dishearten me. I am lost. The King is lost. Edward will pine away, for he knows no one loves him but his sisters. And what may the duke instruct him to think about his sisters? Nay, I will not think upon it. Oh, how terrible political life is!

Catherine Come, Elizabeth, let us have supper. You shall think no more of what ails the country, and think the more of your private joy and comfort. Come, Elizabeth.

(*enter suddenly lord Seymour*)

Seymour Eh, ladies? Is supper ready?

Catherine It is, my lord husband.

Seymour Good for you, Catherine. I would have thrashed you otherwise. Go before us, Catherine; we will follow. I have a word to speak with Elizabeth.

(*exit Catherine*)

What an old despicable crow she is! They say she tortured king Henry to death; now I torture her to death, and I enjoy it.

Elizabeth You forget, my lord, that the King was my father, and I dislike your depreciative speech about my second mother.

Seymour (moving forward) And you, Elizabeth, forget that I am the master of this house and may throw you out any day.

Elizabeth You wouldn't dare!

Seymour I would dare, if I didn't love you.

Elizabeth What kind of absurdity was that?

Seymour I love you, my fair princess. I am honest in saying so.

Elizabeth You make me laugh, my lord. But Catherine is waiting...

Seymour Let her wait. Let me kiss you.

Elizabeth Nay, my lord.

Seymour Just one kiss.

Elizabeth (forces him away) My lord, you are disgusting! Away from here! The supper is getting cold.

Seymour You are never too cold for me, Elizabeth. I shall be your wooer. I shall marry you one day.

Elizabeth And your lady?

Seymour I shall divorce her for your sake.

Elizabeth With your lordship's pardon, my lord is an old disgusting ridiculous fool who but makes me laugh.

Seymour Then you are a bore.

Elizabeth No, only in the sanest of my minds. Eroticism is only foolish idleness and the expression of a sickly lack of character. (*walks out on him.*)

Seymour I will move your heart yet, princess. Your pride shall fall before my love. You'll be mine one day, Elizabeth, and I shall make you the Queen of England. (*exit*)

Scene 3.

Mary Any news from court?

Maid None, princess.

Mary Either you are hated by the world or forgotten. Heard you anything of the King?

Maid Nay, princess, but there were rumours about his illness.

Mary I love him, but yet I long to see him die. My life is void except of blackness, my spirit is dead but for the wish and desire of the throne. Yes, I desire the throne, for that is all in life I have to look forward to. Besides, it would be fun to convert this subverted country and once again submit it to Rome: my father's infinite labours to make it heretic and the present violent protestantic surge shouldn't be too difficult to demolish.

Did you hear about the gravity of his illness?

Maid Nay, my princess.

Mary He has always been at the brink of death. Perhaps he is dead tomorrow; perhaps he dies after an age; both are probable. I know not when he dies, but whenever he dies he is welcome to. For as long as he and his protestantic oppressors live, I am hated, abhorred and practically dead. A ghost is Mary; she never was anything more but longs to becoming so. – What news else from London?

Maid None, princess.

Mary But you must have heard something more of the King.

Maid The Protector protects, or rather guards him day and night, they say, good princess.

Mary Yes, I know. Elizabeth has not been permitted to see him.

Maid Why?

Mary That is not for you to ask a princess, but for me to ask you. Do you know why?

Maid No, your royal highness.

Mary Neither do I. Not that I am eager to see him, but it is a funny sort of prohibition. – You may leave me, maid. (*exit maid*)

It may be heartless and almost inhuman for me to wish the King was dead, but he is not my brother. He is the son of a whore, while I was born of a Queen. Her divorce from my father was never legal and never acceptable to any laws of nature, earth or heaven. We have the same father but not the same blood. Life as it is is no pleasure, but the possession of the throne might give me some leisure. Die, Edward! Please me, just for once! Die soon, and have done with it! You'll only gain by it: everyone is well aware of your atrocious sufferings. Free yourself, Edward, and you

shall free not only me but also old solemn catholic England. Oh England, how I long to civilize you and make you the best servant there is to the best masters there is: Rome and Spain. Any sovereignty is better than no proper order, and the malady of England is this dangerous and protestantic freedom. Be strong and brave, o valiant England, and take on the papal yoke, and in the course of time you will be grateful only, ty myself, to Rome and to the fatherland of virtue, the uncompromising Spain. There is no liberty without disorder and no freedom without chaos, while desirable peace and order only comes from ruthless discipline.

Scene 4. The Court.

Edward (coughs) My state as king consumes me. My strength fails me more day by day; I am more ruled than a ruler, and soon I will be as worthless as any begging orphan. Uncle Edward, are you there? *(coughs)*

Somerset I am, your majesty.

Edward My fever is too high to permit me to stay any longer here today. Help me to my bed, please, dear uncle.

Somerset But your majesty, the duke of Northumberland is coming today to present to you his son and lady Jane Grey.

Edward I am sorry, uncle; I cannot receive them. *(coughs and faints)*

Somerset Oh, my poor child! I had no idea your state was so serious. My God! Let me help you, boy, to comfort and rest, which God knows you need and deserve indeed. Oh lord; let not the King die! Not yet! *(carries out king Edward. Returns soon.)*

Is this what my life has developed into? Will I be the bane of my own beloved king? I have kept away his sisters for the sake of power; I have nourished and maintained him only for the same purpose; will he now die because of my loyal support? O frightful destiny! What have I done to deserve your cudgel? Have I not guided England well? Have I not done all I could to salvage this ancient realm from the tyranny of Rome and fatalistic religion? What have I not done for the weal of England, the future and all the people entrusted to my care? *(enter a page)*

Page Your grace, I bring you some bad news.

Somerset What has happened?

Page Your brother, lord Seymour, has tried to kidnap the King and is screaming to all England that the princess Elizabeth is his wife and the only lawful Queen.

Somerset What scandalous news is this? Why is he acting such an idiot?

Page I know not, your grace.

Somerset He must have gone mad, or worse, lost his head completely by getting drunk with love for the most impossible person in the realm, thus compromising both his wife, the former Queen of England, the princess Elizabeth and his whole family including my own. This is worse than madness. It is total stupidity. – Is his majesty in safety? Has the sudden rebellion of this ignorant idiotic brother of mine been quenched?

Page It never had time to rise, my grace.

Somerset Thank heavens! And the King is quite safe?

Page He is, my lordship.

Somerset Thank God for his mercy! O Lord, I thank thee! Where is my brother now?

Page He is kept in custody by the King's guards.

Somerset Let them take him to the Tower! That's the only proper place for such presumptuously misdirected ambitions! Power is but handled with intelligence, and without cleverness a fool almighty is forever lost. My brother has been asking for a kingdom as a salary for outraging a princess. That is blackmail, not politics. For his

unexampled foolery he must be most severely punished! That is all, page. You may leave.

Page I will bring your message, my lord. (*exit*)

Somerset My own brother a traitor? Life is worse than I thought, and destiny is dealing me one blow after another. This is not the first rebellion against the King but indeed the worst. My own brother! Shall I execute him? No, I can not. I will not cut off Cain's head, though I ought to, being Abel. What would the previous king have done? He would mercilessly have banished my brother's entire family. I can not be as inhuman as that, can I? Nay, it is impossible to reason on this matter; I shall let the King decide, and whatever his decision may be, I shall submit myself to it. My own brother! How could you do such a thing? I am able to forgive your assault against me; but I shall never be able to digest the fact that you have tried to bring the country to ruin by making a drive at the King and misusing his own sister. To me, my brother, you are dead as a fraternal personage; and I care not whether the King decides you to definitely die or no. Whatever your fate may be, you are dead to me.

Scene 5.

(*Enter Elizabeth from one side, William Cecil from the other.*)

Elizabeth Where are all my servants? What has happened?

Cecil Good princess, relax, and prepare yourself for the worst.

Elizabeth Who are you?

Cecil Sir William Cecil, madame, at your service any time but not just now. Your servants have all been taken away.

Elizabeth Why? What have they done? Has a sudden God's damnation suddenly hit this house since it is as silent as death and its people and maids all scattered? I must have an explanation to all this, lord Cecil, whether the heavens have tumbled down or no.

Cecil And I shall give it, princess. But I warrant my news and explanation are not agreeable to your ear.

Elizabeth Let's hear it anyway!

Cecil Madame, the day before yesterday your patron, the lord Seymour, luckily failed in his plotted plan to abduct the King.

Elizabeth My lord Seymour a traitor?

Cecil Indeed, your highness, so he proved himself to be. As a natural consequence his estate and entire household must be committed or acquitted after proper trials.

Elizabeth What will happen to him?

Cecil Your highness, he will most probably be beheaded.

Elizabeth Oh! (*sits down*)

Cecil Your highness, your concern for him is alarming. You are among the first and weightiest suspects, the lord Seymour having named you as his best friend.

Elizabeth He is no such thing to me, nor was he ever!

Cecil It pleases us to hear so, your highness. He also called you graver matters...

Elizabeth Inform me all!

Cecil You shall presently be over-informed by approaching lords sent here to hear you. But before then I shall try to tell you the worst. You are believed to be, your highness, an ambitious princess, eager not only for the prosecuted lord's love, but even for the crown.

Elizabeth Preposterous!

Cecil It may be so. But prepare yourself now, your highness. I hear the knights approaching. Answer their judicial queries plainly and simply, and beware of giving yourself away. Say no more than you have to, stick to basic but complete answers to their questions, answer no more than you are being asked for, and stay calm. Here they are, your highness. Personally I will be your secret friend, since your demeanour speaks but of your innocence.

(enter guards and lords)

a lord Her royal highness the princess Elizabeth, daughter of the late king Henry VIII?

Elizabeth She is here, my lords. What is your want?

Lord We are inquiring into the matter of lord Thomas Seymour's high treason and must by order of his majesty question you presently. May we hear you, princess?

Elizabeth Proceed. Come what may, I trust your errand is serious and sincere since the King has ordained it. I stand at your disposal; you may treat me as you will.

Lord Merely a few questions, your highness, are we to have answered truthfully and carefully. They may be unpleasant and even painful, but...

Elizabeth Let's hear them!

Lord Our first query, princess, is, exactly what do you feel about lord Seymour?

Elizabeth I feel nothing at all about him, gentlemen.

Lord Has he ever courted you, treated you as somebody more than a gentlewoman or even made advances to your person?

Elizabeth He has always treated me well, but never too well.

Lord Thank you, your highness. Did you know anything about his plans?

Elizabeth What were his plans?

Lord Have you heard anything about his hatred of his brother?

Elizabeth I knew he didn't like his brother, but I wouldn't say he downright hated him.

Lord Well answered, your highness. I think this trial soon shall be over.

Elizabeth The sooner the better.

Lord We understand that, good princess. Now, to our next question: has Lord Seymour ever spoken in your presence about the King your brother?

Elizabeth Nay.

Lord Good. What do your servants feel about his being?

Elizabeth The same as I, I warrant: nothing.

Lord Madame, forgive our intrusion. Our business now is done, and we shall leave you in peace. Good afternoon, princess Elizabeth!

Elizabeth Good afternoon, my lords. Am I acquitted?

Lord Not yet, your highness, but soon we shall bring you our verdict.

Elizabeth The sooner the better.

Lord Precisely, your highness. *(exeunt lords and guards)*

Elizabeth Only a short time has elapsed since my beloved mother, my father's last betrothed, the lady Catherine passed away. Still far from recovered from that great and awful loss, my existence loses all ground and firmity by this sudden fall of my patron the Lord Seymour. He has courted me often; in silence I admit it, and often he has been atrocious about it, but never did I fall. I could not deceive my mother so, and I shall never fall to common baseness. I never guessed he was great enough a madman to aim at the ruin of the rule and the overthrow of the King my brother and the Lord Protector! It is scandalous and tragic that all this could happen in England, as if this nation had not been torn apart enough already in the past! *(enter William Cecil)* Back again? So soon? What is the council's verdict?

Cecil Your highness, you are found innocent, and so have all your servants.

Elizabeth Ha-ha! I knew they wouldn't touch me!

Cecil Compose yourself, princess. Hear all my words first.

Elizabeth So I shall. Carry on.

Cecil Lord Seymour will probably be bereft of his life and head one of these days. The loss of his brother and that disappointment will probably soon break down the Lord Protector. Princess, if you love peace and natural order, visit not London nor Westminster.

Elizabeth You know the conditions of the government better than I do, and I shall heed you.

Cecil And, princess, if anything should happen in London to the Protector or the King, take care of the duke of Northumberland! He alone can be a threat to your life in the future. That is all, your highness. I bid you farewell.

Elizabeth Wait, lord Cecil! May I see you again? Will you bring me some news occasionally?

Cecil If it pleases you, I shall return here as soon as it is safe again for you to appear at court.

Elizabeth I long for that day. I have not seen the King since his coronation. The Seymours have kept me imprisoned here. But I must keep you no longer, lord Cecil. Farewell, and give my fondest regards to the King.

Cecil So I shall, if I may see him, which is not altogether certain.

Elizabeth Is he so carefully guarded by the hawk the Protector?

Cecil He is, your highness, though I shouldn't say so. Our conversation has long since flooded all permissible borders. Farewell now, your majesty. Lord Cecil is your servant. *(exit)*

Elizabeth Farewell, my good lord. *(to herself)* You brought me a tempest but expertly disposed of it leaving only your honesty behind. I shall trust you in the future, lord William Cecil, if there is a future expecting me, which I strongly doubt. After all, I have a sister, whose catholic shadow more darkens the future than my light ever will cast light upon it. Poor Edward, my darling brother! All thoughts of my own royal state lead my contemplations back to you. Shall I ever see you again alive? I doubt it now more than ever. Yet I will continue to hope. If the imperious Lord Protector follows his fallen brother to the grave, I shall be the first one to hurry to London to drag my feeble beloved brother to his feet. But too much has happened today. I must say good-night, or else my wearied mind will go astray. *(exit)*

Scene 6.

Somerset My brother is dead and lost; my king no longer trusts my good intentions; all people hate me bitterly, and personally I am void of all excitable stuff. What is to become of us? I regard my situation, the present, the future as hopeless; there is nothing left to believe in, nothing left to trust and cherish; there is nothing left in life but death.

I have murdered many innocent people. I know it, but I can't regret it. They were murdered not by me but by the Lord Protector for the government's sake. The Lord Protector now is dead. I bear his name but am but his waning shadow. England, oh England, I tried to master you. Forgive me if I failed.

My King, my little beloved handsome Edward, forgive me if I patronized you. Excuse a tyrant's bloody ambition to be tyrannical. Tyrants, only, know what it is to be a tyrant: it is to gain everything including the highest pitch of courage, fearlessness and proud satisfaction, and then to lose it all and have nothing left but one's own weak and useless, petty worthless and penniless forfeited brain and body, spent together with one's irretrievable forlorn soul.

Death, I wait for you. I am expecting any moment knights with halberds to come and fetch me to my execution. I regret nothing. The King has asked if I repent, but there is nothing I should repent. Any man would have acted as Edward Seymour did had he been put in the same shoes as Edward Seymour. No man would have succeeded better than I, and none would have succeeded worse either, for all men are basically human. It is human to try one's luck with fate, to make a giant effort to succeed, and it is equally human to fail. Misery awaits us all, and especially those of us who prove themselves quite human.

The rest I say to God in the form of pious innocent prayers. (*prays*)

(*enter archbishop Cranmer with guards*)

Cranmer My lord Somerset, the King is wondering if you have repented.

Somerset I have repented nought.

Cranmer Then the Tower is expecting you.

Somerset So it will be expecting you, Thomas Cranmer, the day your ambitions no longer suit the monarch's game.

Cranmer I do not game with the King.

Somerset Neither did I. The King gamed with me, though.

Cranmer You made yourself a player who mistook the King for something like a chess-piece, but he was human.

Somerset So am I like you a human being only, and we are all three completely powerless against our game, for not until it is too late, we realize, that our sole competitor has all the time been death, who always wins infallibly.

Cranmer Farewell, Somerset.

Somerset Live well, archbishop, in the game of inhumanity against humanity. God save you from that game so that you might escape it.

Cranmer Do not comfort me. I ought to comfort you.

Somerset I anticipated you. Farewell. (*exit with guards*)

Cranmer Farewell, ambitious but honest duke. You grew to become an ornament to the state when you lost your ambitions. We regret that you had to go further than that and lose all. But winners must lose all, or else there would be no more winners. The game of life has to go on: to win what others won before you is the meaning of it; and like those who lost it before you to let you win it, you must lose it also to let others win it. Only he who loses all was worthy of his winnings. Now the duke of Somerset is gone; who will take his place? Only a man as ambitious as he could take it over, and I believe the man to be the mighty duke of Northumberland.

Act II Scene 1.

Northumberland My son, you shall be King some day.

Guilford King Guilford the First? You are joking, my father.

Northumberland You are joking with me to say so. I intend to make the most of the sick King's favours and make your lady Jane Grey Queen after king Edward's death.

Guilford You are ambitious, my father.

Northumberland To be ambitious is to be alive.

Guilford Bit isn't it dangerous? How many earls before you have not lost their heads for insisting to be ambitiously alive?

Northumberland Dozens of incompetent earls, I agree, but I am not incompetent.

Guilford What makes you imagine so?

Northumberland My blood, my sense, my wit, and my outstanding excellence in all sports. I shall prove myself the best man in England yet.

Guilford Good luck, my father, but do not expect any help from me.

Northumberland Avaunt, my son! You are incompetent, wherefore I need you not. Go to your books and read your tales of antiquated chivalry; that's all you're good for. The throne shall be mine one day without your help and without anyone else's. The King loves me, son, the King loves me!

Guilford (aside) What an ape! What a creature! What a disgusting father I have! Has he learned nothing from the career of the duke of Somerset? Has the tragedy of ambitions, so often repeated, taught him nothing about ambitions? Evidently not. Therefore I shall keep out of his way, and if he loses his head attribute it to nothing but his own judgement.

Northumberland What are you muttering, son?

Guilford I was merely thinking.

Northumberland Go and think in your own closet, stupid! Thought is ambition's gravest foe. Begone, therefore, son, and leave me in peace with my splendid future expectations! (*exit Guilford*)

My son is a silly ass, a thick-headed bull, a meaningless philosopher who is good for nothing. Yet I intend to put him on the stage as the royal consort of Queen Jane Grey, who shall be guided by those puppet strings which I will tie to my fingers and pull to make the nation jump in my uniquely competent direction!

Scene 2.

Edward Am I dying? Am I dying, Archbishop?

Cranmer Be brave, my son. We will do our best to preserve you from dismal death.

Edward Where are my sisters? Are they not here to see me even when I am dying?

Cranmer You are not dying, my son. You shall live yet for many a decade.

Edward You lie, Archbishop! I know that I am dying! I know that you all know that death is taking me away from life. Help me, somebody! Rescue me from the claws of death! I must not die yet.

Cranmer No, you must not die, majesty.

Edward My lords, listen. This is my last wish. Obey me, hark me, and follow my last command. When I am dead, the lady Jane Grey shall be Queen.

One lord (aside to another) Preposterous!

The other (aside) The King can't be serious!

Edward I hear you, gentlemen! Oh, treason, treason, treason! I am not dead yet! Long live my successor the lady Jane Grey!

Northumberland She shall be Queen, your majesty.

Edward Yes, my lords, she shall. Be ruled by the duke of Northumberland when I am gone.

Lords We shall, your majesty.

Edward Oh, I fear this sudden death. Is there nothing anyone could do about it? I was never mature enough to be a king, but I am even more immature to be ruled by death. Oh God! (*dies*)

Cranmer The fair young childish unwell and unhappy King is now dead, my lords. My duke of Northumberland, we are ready to receive your step-daughter in office.

Northumberland Good, Archbishop. Presently I shall inform her of the fact that she is now the next Queen of England. I shall bring her to you anon. (*exit*)

Lord My lord Archbishop, what really was the King's illness?

Cranmer He was not ill. He was merely weak and suffered in addition from an inward menace which is unknown to us.

Lord No physic could cope with it?
Cranmer Physics, science, medicine, drugs, herbs and witchcraft; all was in vain.
As old Menander said: Loved by the gods dies young. Gentlemen, let us pray.
(*All kneel and pray.*)

Scene 3.

Elizabeth Northumberland wants me to join him. Jane Grey is crowned, the old fat goat gluttons and wallows in his repugnant triumph, but the people will have nothing of him. They all cry for Mary. Everyone has forgot the matter of Mary's monstrous faith; all they want is Queen Mary, glorious Queen Mary. Therefore I will join Mary. I love this people and will sooner be guided by them than by a blasphemous preposterous old vain and half-mad duke. Farewell, protestantism, and welcome, chaos and catholic Mary! I must follow the stream and attend to fashion, for if I do not, how could I ever become its chief designer? It is beyond doubt, and everyone expects it, that Mary will do her worst as a regent; consequently I am England's only hope. I must bear with black catholic Mary, or else I could never bear with England. Until I am ready to bear England on my strong woman's back, welcome, slavery, and let me suffer well. Harden me, teach me to cope with the worst, break my heart and honour if you want to, but make me good enough for England. All I want is to serve this people well, and until I am ready to do it: fate, educate me! I challenge you to discipline me in the hardest and toughest of schools for the most exacting of works: the travail of coping with a nation. Lord Cecil! (*enter lord Cecil*)

Cecil My princess!

Elizabeth Take me to Queen Mary. I shall accompany her to London and give my support at casual battles with ignoble Northumberland.

Cecil I shall bring you to Woodstock, where Mary's forces are heading at the moment. There you will unite and then together proceed towards London.

Elizabeth Mary shall know that I am her prostrate servant. I shall do everything for her: grow catholic, accompany her in her masses, wear black garments, and serve her in whatever adventures she may serve England with. I shall undergo everything necessary and spite the blackest fortune in order to favour a future spring of England. Come, my good lord William! To Woodstock!

Scene 4.

Northumberland What voices do I hear from the square? Mary, long live queen Mary, they shout. A ghastlier sound never reached my ears. Are they completely ignorant about that their Queen is Jane Grey, my son Guilford's wife? Alas, what will become of this people? (*Enter a lord*) Do you bring me some news?

Lord I do, your highness.

Northumberland Glad tidings?

Lord I am afraid not, your honour.

Northumberland Let me hear them. Free them from thy tongue however ghastly they may be.

Lord Your army, my lord, is scattered and blown to pieces, like by the wind.

Northumberland Was there no battle?

Lord There was no real battle, my lord, only frivolous fights. Your commanders are all on their way to their homes, if they have not joined your enemies.

Northumberland This news is my ruin.

Lord The princess Mary will enter London tomorrow. Her sister is riding by her side.

Northumberland Elizabeth has joined her, eh? Out, disheartening messenger! Leave me in peace with my utter frustration. (*exit lord*)

No one cares one bit about the Queen I've crowned. All willingly forget their country's mightiest duke, most willing friend and humblest servant. Shall I stand this? Is this this nation's reward for my honest and diligent service? The people will kill me now. Mary, the catholic ambitious hawk, will hang me or burn me. That is the world's sense of gratitude. My predecessor, the duke of Somerset, now dead, almost made his land disintegrate. I, a far-fetched earl, bothered to put it all together again. Being worthy of reward, I crowned my daughter-in-law and made her Queen. Now they will burn her and me too. The catholic bitch will probably burn every protestant in the country. Nay, I understand not life. It is a nightmare which you can do nothing about. And yet I tried to do something about it, and I believe my effort was not in vain.

(*enter lord*)

lord My lord, the Queen has disappeared.

Northumberland Has Jane disappeared?

Lord Aye, your highness. She is fled, no one knows where.

Northumberland Perhaps I ought to try that too. But nay. I can understand her. She is young, I am old. She wants to live, naturally; to me life is a matter of indifference. I shall not bother much about escaping what awaits us all. Was there anything more?

Lord The people compose songs and psalms to the glory of their queen Mary.

Northumberland Out, relentless news-bringer! Out, I say! (*exit lord*) They never even spoke my little Jane's name; now they laud the name of a woman who probably shall prove as wicked as the blackest crowned witch in history. Out, brief light! I tried to master thee but see thee now followed by a denser darkness than I ever believed could emerge on this dark and hopeless stage which is the tortured, dying, meaningless world. (*retires*)

Scene 5. Enter Mary, Elizabeth and others.

Mary At last this bloody country is mine! Chancellor, summon my Parliament! We shall break up the Church! Elizabeth, if you'll not be converted immediately to the only proper faith, I'll have burnt at the stake!

Elizabeth But, sweet sister, I'll become a faithful catholic most willingly!

Mary Quiet! I am no longer your sister but your majesty the Queen! Kneel to me! Kiss this dirty slipper! (*Elizabeth obeys and stoops to kiss her sister's foot.*) Ha-ha! Look at her! How wretched she is! I know not, Elizabeth, whether you are earnest in your desire to become catholic or merely guileful, but whatever you are, I'll see to it you'll become irrevocably catholic forever. Take her away, lords, instruct her, make a true catholic out of her, and exorcise her, if necessary, of all her protestantic demons, follies and morbid corruptions. Elizabeth, you'll make the firmest and most relentless catholic in England, or you'll die, like all heretics!

Elizabeth (aside) I will be taught by you only as long as you are to be taught by, for every woman knows her best teacher is her instincts. (*lords and priests go out with her.*)

Mary And now, my lords, to business! Where is his grace the archbishop of Canterbury?

Lord He is watched at his apartments, madame.

Mary Good. Take him without further delay to the Tower!

Lord Yes, your majesty.

Mary He shall have the draughtiest and coldest of cells! See to it!

Lord I will, madame. *(exit)*
Mary And where is his grace the duke of Northumberland?
Lord Our soldiers caught him trying to escape together with his daughter-in-law, the usurper Jane Grey.
Mary Take them both to the Tower! *(aside)* They shall be beheaded soon. Oh, how I love playing the tyrant! All my life I have been victimised by this country, this world, this people; all my life I have sought revenge, and at last it now lies within my reach. Before I am finished every bloody protestant of England shall be brought to cinders. My highest wish is to see every protestant in the world in ashes, spread by the wind all over the place, from pole to pole. Reginald Pole!
(enter Sir Reginald Pole)
Pole Your majesty!
Mary You shall be my next archbishop of Canterbury,
Pole (overwhelmed) Your highness!
Mary – if you well perform your duties first.
Pole I will do, your majesty, whatever you command me to.
Mary I want to marry.
Pole What husband is your choice?
Mary I want Spain to be my lord and husband. Prince Philip is the object of my looks. Future archbishop, see to it!
Pole I will, your majesty. *(exit)*
Mary (after some pause) I must have Spain to chastise England with, for only in that black impenetrable state is there a perfect instrument for extirpation of all undesirables: the glorious invulnerable inquisition.

Act III scene 1.

Elizabeth My lord Cecil, what might be the cause of your honouring me with a visit? Might it be good news?
Cecil Unfortunately, your royal highness, I bring only the worst thinkable news. That is the only reason for my coming. Your sister Mary's sly proposal to Philip has succeeded. England is now becoming a part of Spain. Mary will befriend you more than ever but only in order to find substantial reason for getting rid of you. At any time now you may be arrested.
Elizabeth And is my sister doing well?
Cecil She is at her best and in perfect health. She is looking forward to begetting her first child with Philip. That is all, your royal highness. If she knew that I were here she would instantly decapitate me.
Elizabeth Then you must stay no longer. Farewell, my loyal servant. *(Cecil leaves.)*
 What next? I am not even safe in isolation. But someone's coming.
Soldiers (knocking on the door) Is anybody home?
Elizabeth I am afraid there is.
Soldier (entering) You have a right to be afraid. Our orders are to escort you to another safer home.
Elizabeth What home is that?
Soldier The Tower.
Elizabeth Why?
Soldier The Queen wants perfect control of who is visiting you and why.
Elizabeth So there are no accusations against me?
Soldier None whatever as yet.
Elizabeth I must have a permission to speak with my sister.

Soldier You have that permission. Our orders are to first of all escort you to Her Majesty. *(the soldiers escort the princess out)*

Scene 2. At Mary's court.

Soldier She is here now.

Mary Show her in. *(Elizabeth is entered.)*

My darling little sister! Let me hug you with a kiss! *(embraces her and kisses her.)* How cold and rigid you are. Is there no warmth and sisterly love left in your body? I thought you were my sister. But you are. My darling sister, I have asked you here in order to give you one last chance. Will you stoop to my will, abandon all your liberal sympathies and become a perfect catholic?

Elizabeth But I am a perfect catholic. You made me one by force.

Mary But you never embraced the only proper faith with full conviction. You follow the holy mass with indifference, you never go to confession, and your eyes are ever burning with subdued opposition whenever anything of holiness is mentioned. You must abandon all devilish thoughts and whole-heartedly become one of us.

Elizabeth I repeat that I already am most completely a catholic and nothing else.

Mary So you refuse to cooperate.

Elizabeth I do cooperate completely. You own my soul. What more do you want?

Mary You are a most unskilful hypocrite. You haven't given us your soul, and when you say you have you lie most shamefully. You try to play a part, your words are but a torpid mask, and behind this unconvincing masquerade there is a sly and obstinate Elizabeth who in her heart is still a protestant just like her promiscuous parents. Elizabeth, I have to offer you an ultimatum. If you do not renounce the devil totally forever, that is all protestantic sympathies, you will be committed to the Tower.

Elizabeth There is no devil to renounce.

Mary What did you say?

Elizabeth What I said was, that there is no devil to renounce. There is only God, and I am not going to renounce Him.

Mary Lo! The devil speaks! God has no contact with any human being except the Pope and possibly my husband. Only the devil communicates with ordinary human beings. Hence, if you have any contact with either God or the devil it must be the devil. Come on now, sister! Be reasonable and renounce the devil!

Elizabeth I renounce the devil.

Mary You do not sound completely enthusiastic nor at all convincing. You have to renounce him thoroughly!

Elizabeth My sister, enough of this nonsense. I don't believe in any kind of devil nor in any evil. I just believe in God.

Mary Then you are no catholic!

Elizabeth I am what I am, and nothing can be done about it, for I will still remain just what I am.

Mary My sister, don't compel me to have you executed. You are my only sister and my only problem. All other matters are resolved, I and Philip own the world, England has become completely catholic, and only you keep standing outside this our consummate order of things. Why are you so obnoxiously stupid?

Elizabeth My sister, I have nothing else to say. I would only repeat myself if I did.

Mary My court, you witness all the unreasonableness of this creature. We have given her a fair and final chance, and she has refused to avail herself of it. Take her to the Tower. She is lost and no longer our sister. No, I have never even had a sister. If I once had a sister she is dead, and I deny her legitimacy. This tramp without

descendancy has no place in the royal quarters of Westminster. Take her away!
(Elizabeth is taken away.)

My sister, you have proved now that you never will become my loyal subject. Still I can not execute you, because I know that you are still a virgin. You are the only stainless human being I know in existence, and there is no morsel of a case against you. Although you are not a catholic in your conviction you embrace the faith most formally, which frees you from all imaginable charges. Nor do you make it easier for me by cringing to me rather than become a martyr. If you had made any kind of resistance you would have been dead long ago.

The only possible solution to this problem is that I conceive a son. If I beget one, there is no problem left, and the protestantic ghost will be defeated. And only if I have this longed for son I will dare execute you without cause or reason. Philip!

Philip (enters) Yes, my dear?

Mary Love me, Philip! All the welfare of the world depends on your loving me! We must have children! Or else the catholic church will be lost in England!

Philip My beloved, you know well how much I love you. Do not worry. Sooner or later God will give us a son. The world is formed according to His will.

Mary He is not the one to give me children! It is you!

Philip My dear, do not become hysterical, and don't exaggerate! The world is God's, not ours. (leaves)

Mary That wooden man will never give me any children. I would not conceive a bastard even in the harem of the Turkish sultan! Such a prince at least would give me some or other kind of love. This Spanish hermit does not think of anything except his God of impotence! (leaves in fury)

Horace (the old attendant) I hope indeed she will not ever have a child, just for the sake of those poor children who might then be hers. For if she had a child with Philip, such a child would carry with her the incurable stamp of misfortune, just like her hopelessly fanatical and godforsaken parents do.

Scene 3. The Tower.

(Elizabeth is moved to her prison. Lord Cecil catches up with the armed company.)

Cecil Your highness! All England is only waiting for your signal! In your name stands an underground army waiting only for your word to take off the heads of Philip and the bloody Mary.

Elizabeth Be quiet, your honour. Someone can hear you. Be patient. No war signal is ever to be given from me. Be you all as quiet as I am, have patience without end and wait. I pray you, guards, take me along. I will not partake ever in a civil war.

Cecil Your sister Mary hardly leaves us any choice. She has no scruples and no sense, infuriates all England, has decapitated all the best friends of your father's, even cousins like Jane Grey, no more than seventeen years old and innocence incarnate, with her father, our Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk. I must earnestly insist, your highness, – a rebellion now could never fail.

Elizabeth Avaunt, base tempter! Will you have us both beheaded before dawn? There is no patience in Mary, she has for that reason gone too far long since, has made her government impossible and most unpopular and can but be defeated by our patience. That is also our only possibility of safe survival. Give that word to all your secret armies, let them save their blood and limbs for better future use by going home, since whatever follows in the future must be better than this present dismal day.

But who is this I see in this abhorrent prison? Could this old lice-bitten beggar in these rags be our archbishop Thomas Cranmer?

Cranmer That is whom I used to be. You are correct. Now is my soul and life's long work like this decrepit sick old body torn in dismal rags. But what might you be doing here, my favourite and bravest princess? Are you also quite condemned by bloody Mary?

Elizabeth No, archbishop Cranmer, I am only here to pay a visit, certainly imprisoned but occasionally only and without expecting further punishment.

Cranmer Then there is still some hope left for our lost and starving nation. Mary's days will reach a certain end which will be a most certain anti-climax, like all monomaniacal failures in history, the never-ending comedy to be guffawed at since it never will consist of anything else than laughable failures in infinite repetition, for man is an incurable fool who never learns a lesson, wherefore he is nothing but a chronical comedian. Only you have never laughed at others' failures since you don't commit mistakes as fain as others do.

Elizabeth You know me well, archbishop Cranmer.

Cranmer And I think we know each other.

Elizabeth These atrocious Tower guards drag me away from your beloved presence.

Cranmer That is how my final contact with my country is bereft me. Formerly the bishops and the cardinals were all the bloody crooks of this our world. I tried as archbishop of Canterbury to be the opposite, and therefore you find me here in the Tower dismally imprisoned by catholic bishops and cardinals. It only serves to serve the church if you by serving the church serve no one but yourself. Thomas Cromwell found that out but made a failure since he tried to serve the King, and now the church is gone. Her freedom is now chained, and like myself her whole identity will burn to cinders at the stake. I will be burnt tomorrow, and she will finally be beheaded at Queen Mary's last most bloody moments, for she will not spare our church from her politics, the most shameful circus in the world and the most ridiculous. If only we could tame man's natural capacity for ruthlessness, the world politics would no longer be the ruin of humanity as the most shameful circus of the world but merely a most ridiculous comedy of errors. But such a disarmed comedy I will not have the pleasure to experience until I am bereft of my last piece of property – my share in life itself with all its wonderful eternity of human and divine universality.

Guard (to lord Cecil) My lord, you have to leave. I fear that you have seen too much.

Cecil Cruel guard! You shut me out from all the light there is in England.

Guard Light? In these dark Tower dungeons without the tiniest aperture?

Cecil The lady that you took away was England's only moment of brief light.

Guard You mock me, Sir. All lights that enter in the Tower are forever quenched. That's the purpose of the Tower. No one comes in here except to stay in here forever after having turned into a corpse and that most voluntarily.

Cecil Do you not know, guard, that the lady whom you just imprisoned was Elizabeth, the heir to England's crown and throne?

Guard There are no names here in the Tower. This is the core of all the national bureaucracy where nothing is allowed except anonymity. One bishop here, one queen over there, a pious princess here, a chancellor in there, they be soon all the same, completely equal as torn lice-bitten beggars ending up quite apathetic and indifferent as corpses. If you, Sir, have a name and want to keep it, leave immediately and never venture to come back. It is for your own good, Sir, that I now drive you out. (*drives him out.*)

Queer eccentrics enter here sometimes indeed! Good riddance I say to some of them! In here is only death, and light is only with those fooling madmen who prefer the life of sunshine and natural liberty outside. I call them fooling madmen when they fail to recognize their happiness. In here there is no happiness except among the

rats and lice and crawling things of dampness, which are expert at together gnawing quite the souls of prisoners to death through unescapable pneumonia, if the victims do not freeze to death forgetting all their feelings of identity as winter enters with the creeping cold of frigorific frost. They usually go down to death long before winter, since the cold in here is such, that every dew-drop freezes quite to stone-hard ice long in advance before the fatal stroke of winter comes.

Scene 4. The Tower.

(The cell of Princess Elizabeth. She stands by the wee window looking out.)

Elizabeth The Tower. That's the truth of England. Dirty dungeons. Jails and bars, hard gratings, cold damp stone walls, black and dismal knights and guards in every nook and crannie. Not a finger can be moved but someone does observe it and forbids it. Nothing is allowed. You can do nothing, and you may do nothing. Prisons – that's the truth of power, monarchies, and all the states in Europe. No one rises gloriously to power but a hundred people pay for it by being led to prison, where they smother. Hard cruel world, misguided by its every guide! Who said those words: "The way to learn the true condition of a country is to learn the true condition of its shut up prisoners". Oh, huge imposing black and dreary walls, apart from you my only company are all these creeping lice! Sweet sunshine, blessed are all those who may enjoy your light, and they don't know how graced they are. Oh, what a bliss to course in nature, running barefoot on your golden fields! To hunt the deer, the stag, the swine, to ride about on merry mares in dark green labyrinths of forests, hills, deep valleys, mountains and a river hindering the course. To sail out with a caravel of those who father built, to conquer all the seas, to master alien continents and battling for them with great storms and hurricanes! To sink, perhaps, but always to survive. To war with heathens, infidels and black heretics, and to take a powerful revenge on all those dreary black pedantic horrifying catholics, who turned this England to a flaming pyre, to a hell for innocents, while they themselves, all devils, laughed in heaven which they plundered, drinking, boozing and carousing. What a life a show like that would be! But I am speaking shamefully. To punish evil with more evil is the greatest evil. Why did Mary put me here? What did I do to her? I just did nothing. Why is it forbidden to live well in peace, to eat good food in comfortableness, to quietly enjoy the beauty of this humdrum life, to love philosophy, the silence, loneliness, oneself and all the lovability of our existence? Why may no one ever live in peace? The more you love retirement, philosophy, yourself, the universe and peace, the more men bother you and torture you and drag you most persistently to hellish things which they bename reality. If certain individuals are capable of managing without that hard reality and do so happily, why may they not? Why must they be dragged down at any cost from their felicity? What harm is there in certain people having what I call a certain sense of beauty? Must the rest, the mob, the soulless mass of ignorant unthinking workers, necessarily fare ill because a few fare well? No, God has never meant it so. He made the paradise in order that good worthy men should find it and enjoy it. Those who lack the sense of spiritual qualities and insight have themselves to blame for ignorance and no one else. Where wisdom is in want it must be sought, and he who wants it but ignores the seeking of it is a case of hopelessness to be ignored.

The sum of humanism is tolerance, that irresistible divine constructive everlastingly expansive child of civilization. Dark intolerance is the sick mark of superstition, bigotry and prejudice, that active ignorance which it is our duty to eliminate the power of. But why did ignorance and superstition ever get established in a firm position of oppression? That is something for the learned to discuss in a safe

distant future where the name of Satan nevermore is mentioned nor the mere idea even taken seriously. Beauty, tolerance, good food, good comfort, culture, art, good peace, philosophy and humble kindness, those are some good truthful names which constitute a better God than all the hells and heavens, purgatories, cults and angels and weird rites which always have confused the minds of men. The only sane authority in history was common sense, that factor should be crowned as king forever, and all things irrational should be assigned to childish dreams of definite unseriousness. But quiet down, my thoughts: an actor must not keep the stage alone too long. *(drums are heard from a distance)*

But what drums are those thundering out of this dark silence of the grave? Who has been executed, or who has been buried now alive? *(enter lord Cecil)* Lord Cecil!

Cecil My most royal princess, you are free.

Elizabeth What are you saying?

Cecil You are free.

Elizabeth You must be bluffing, or you simply are not real. I fail to understand you and can even less believe you.

Cecil Mary's schemes have failed. She can no longer justly hold you prisoner, for Thomas Wyatt has refused to lie before the face of God and thereby make you his accomplice.

Elizabeth Did she plan such outrage?

Cecil They kept torturing the man until his blood was almost emptied to the last drop from his body. He is dying now a martyr pure and innocent for truth.

Elizabeth Sir Thomas Wyatt dying?

Cecil They will kill him so that the established crooks of this catholic government may stay a little longer in position. It is the old story once again: one is sacrificed, so that the many may survive.

Elizabeth So that is why the drums are rolling? *(runs to the small window)*

O my God! They bring him forth! They place his head now on the block! *(the drums grow louder)* The executioner is ready, and his axe is raised. It falls! *(she looks away)* Another noble family is extirpated by Queen Mary. Thomas Wyatt's father was a poet greatly honoured and appreciated by my father and my mother. Mary, this was sacrilegious!

Cecil I am afraid that what is done is irrevocable. It is no use to linger with a tearful eye by the most bloody sight of such an heinous crime.

Elizabeth His memory must be revered and honoured like Sir Thomas More's. Why do we live if not to be remembered by our progeny? Those young ones who forget the greatness of their dead will die themselves too early without honour.

Cecil So be it.

Elizabeth But why did he rebel?

Cecil He could not stand a future looking too unfairly catholic and Spanish.

Elizabeth Then he had a reason good enough for dying, and he made a great example.

Cecil Don't forget that you are free, madame, with all your future.

Elizabeth Thomas Wyatt liberated me.

Cecil Yes, Thomas Wyatt died to save his mistress.

Elizabeth Let us then get out of here and wait in safety for the fall of my poor sister Mary, who turned out to be so miserable as a tyrant. Rotten apples never do hang very long in reasonable trees. Lord Cecil, do you follow me and all my purposes?

Cecil I do indeed but not without a silent critic's reservations. I will follow you in all your courses but will stick with constancy to my own conscience above all.

Elizabeth That's good. Pray, guard me well and criticize me carefully. I must needs have that constant urgent watch. My blood is of that same capricious quality which marks the blood of Mary, our father was a butcher like herself, so I will need a

guardian of conscience. Only criticize me, though, with truth and never only for the sake of words or entertainment.

Leave me now in peace until my sister finally is gone. She must be going now already, since she does not grant the Englishmen a heart. Thereby she only strangles her own heart, but no one can endure a life without a heart. I guess she must be dead soon for that reason.

Keep in touch when she has given up her folly. At that moment I will come to you, for then I shall be needing you.

Cecil I thank you, royal princess.

Elizabeth No, lord Cecil, I thank you. *(They walk out into the light.)*

Scene 5. Queen Mary's court.

Mary The Church is incapable of love. She can not make children, so she can not make love, and that's the tragedy of catholicism. We catholics are virtuous but barren like my mother. We have failed in England, and the only reward for my endeavour is ingratitude and all the people's hatred beside this dreadful nickname they have given me which will cling to me for all eternity. I have nothing else to do in life now but to die a victim to my own ambition, my religious effort and my self-consuming passion, which was never shared by Philip. I have started many wars but never won a victory. My life sums up in a confession of my utter defeat against God, who never allows any human being to rule the world alone. I destroyed all competition, which turned into my defeat, for not even king Philip of the mighty Spain would love a woman who was totally possessed by power. *(retires)*

Philip (enters) My father subdued all the world and gave it all to me for my inheritance, and now I see it capsize from infection of a universal tiredness and spleen. My wedded queen is barren like a desert, and my family will soon be extinct. The world my father gave me for inheritance is running out between my fingers, and that is apparently the law of heritage. What you create must die with you, for God can not maintain the vain constructions of mortality. God is creator, not a labourer or gardener or servant. I did not create my empire myself, and therefore I was never worthy of it. I must therefore lose it all. Testamentation is a vanity; you can not rely on others to take over what you gave your spirit. Each man must completely on his own build up his empire and his life's work. The fellow who is not creative is not capable of management. My busiest task in life has been to celebrate my masses and to say my constant prayers, that is how I cultivated my eternal life, but this most troublesome and awkward world, which I did nothing to deserve, must fall, because my father, who created it, is dead.

O God, what is the meaning of our lives when all our holy church traditions are as futile as thin air? The present age gives nothing for Saint Augustine, for Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint Francis or the "Summa Theologica" of Thomas from Aquino. In this new world the Church is no more up to date with her demand for piety, asceticism and virtue, which I shockingly experienced above all in this most hard and alien nation, which I married into but which never wanted me. No Spaniard can thrive in this cold stale phlegmatic and too naturally liberal free-thinking country. God is silent here in England to my urgent prayers, he is altogether silent here like all the bones of all the graves of all humanity forgotten by all human memory. It seems to me that God is dead like all the corpses gathered by the ruthlessness of history from this so miserably hopeless world of comfortless and starving multitudes of forlorn madmen born to darkness, dying ever like the shadows of an ever waning dusk.

Page (entering) Your majesty, the Queen is ill and asks for your company.

Philip Tell her that I would most unwillingly satisfy her wish.

Page Your majesty, such an answer would break her heart.

Philip Then break her heart. You have my full permission. I must leave this godforsaken country now, because Spain needs me, (*aside*) and there I might rediscover God. Let Queen Mary die without me. Maybe that will shorten her sufferings. I am tired of the stinking sentimentality of sick women. If they can't be positive, then let them be, and if they must complain, let them alone with it, and if they ail, just let them. Every person is responsible for her own fate and can't get help from others with it. Tell her that I have returned to Spain. (*page leaves.*) I will leave at once. Let's get the hell out of England. (*exit*)

Mary (*behind the scene, screaming*) No! (*a pause*) It cannot be true! (*enter in night-gown, dishevelled and haggard, holding her stomach because of pains, etc.*) He can not forsake me! O Philip, beloved husband! Are you such a coward, then, that you dare leave me while I'm dying? Ah! (*screams for pain*) Ah! (*wallowing on the floor from pains.*)

Page (*enters*) Your majesty, you can not be here on the floor at such a distance from your bed.

Mary What fate would suit me finer than to lie here in most torturous convulsions almost naked? What do I deserve if not this very business? Ah! (*screaming from pain*) A curse on all my government! God damn my ugly matrimony, which bestowed on me nothing but cysts and tumours! Damnation over England, which only hated me to death! I curse that bloody Philip who abandoned me! God damn that rotten Spain and all the papal sacrilegious church! Damnation over all humanity! I hope all people will destroy each other, perishing in everlasting wars of false religions! That is all humanity deserves: flagitious unhumanity! Ah! (*screams*)

Page Your majesty, it is not fitting... it is not appropriate...

Mary I know! I am not appropriate for England! I am not suitable! Then let me die! That's my ultimate desire! Ah! (*writhing in pain*) (*the page makes a sign, a number of servants appear to take care of the Queen, who is carried out.*) Leave me alone! Let me die alone in peace! Let me just die before I have managed to execute all England! (*she is carried away with her pains.*)

Scene 6. London town.

A fashionable square with many people of all kinds.

(*enter a courtier*)

courtier Hello, friend Peter! Have you heard the news?

Peter What news? (*The courtier whispers something in Peter's ears. Peter shines up.*)

That's news indeed! The sun is here again now after having been too far away for far too long an absence! Now we may at last breathe fresh delicious dustfree air again! I must at once go tell my friends the news! (*leaves courtier*)

Hey, Patrick! Have you heard what I have heard?

Patrick That depends on what you've heard. What have you heard? (*Peter whispers in his ear.*) Don't you call her a Queen! She was no more a Queen than I am bloody Mary's lover! But it certainly is news, and I will tell my friends about it. (*Peter disappears in the crowd.*) Say, how do you do, Sir Arthur! Have you heard the news from court?

Sir Arthur I have not, and I will not, for the reason that I am quite sick of everything that comes from court. No news is good news when it comes from wretched Mary's court.

Patrick But this will gladden you. (*whispers in his ear*) Or won't it?

Sir Arthur I don't know. An evil ruthless mad fanatic Queen is dead but will but be replaced by yet another evil ruthless mad fanatic Queen. You mark my words! They

will come true! No Queen is fit to rule a country. Only Kings are good for purposes of power. But this news, although it comes from court, I certainly will further and inform my friends of.

Hey, Sir Charles! How do you do!

Sir Charles Sir Arthur! How are you this morning?

Sir Arthur No better than on any ordinary day, but truth is something one should ever be as silent and abstruse about as mice about their robbéd cheese, for speaking of it does not ever make truth any better or the slightest bit less hopelessly diseased. In social company, therefore, and for the sake of good relations, one should never say how matters stand indeed. But I have some quite fresh and rosy information for your well brought up discreet, discriminating and discerning ear, if you will lend it to me. (*whispers in Sir Charles' ear*)

Sir Charles This is grave and hefty news. The nation has long needed it, and hearing it at last will make it soar to heaven with delight, for pleasant news it is indeed for senseless English crowds who do not know that Queens, no matter how they are as Queens, are human beings also even they. Let's tell lord Cecil this important piece of news. – Lord Cecil, have you heard the news?

Cecil What news?

Sir Charles The Queen is dead.

Cecil Is that the reason why the sky today is blue and bright and smiling of delight? Is that the reason why our town today looks bright with joy and eager with the thirst for work and action? Smiles our Father in his heaven on this country suddenly with kindness, after endless years of terrible oppression? Are you certain it is true?

Sir Charles The only pleasant truth I've heard in all my life.

Cecil To court, then! I must see with never lying eyes that bloody Mary finally is dead, for if it be a joke or lie, life can not be more cruel.

Sir Charles Let the blue sky be your witness with this booming seething national delight which marks the mind of every Londoner today! Can you look any English person in her eyes today and disbelieve that bloody Mary finally is dead?

Cecil It seems to me as if we finally have found ourselves.

Sir Charles That is the proof! Let our identity as Englishmen newborn today be satisfying and enough as evidence!

Cecil Undoubtedly this miracle of history, of faces and of national mentality speaks more than truth.

(*to the audience*) The nightmare now is over, and in thousands Englishmen and Londoners will cheer by Mary's sealed up coffin. Let us now forget all evil that was done, and let's instead look forward to the light of future and its fairest bud the virgin Queen. May she now constitute the contrary of all that we have suffered during twenty-five long cruel unending years of crisis caused by the undisciplined loose passions of the house of Tudor and nine queens, among which eight at least fell victims.

Now with speed to blessed brave Elizabeth, who certainly by now ought to have learnt some wisdom after all those madnesses produced by her own family.

(*exit*)

THE END.