



Some Queens
of England

Part One

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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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 until 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 protestant 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 hamstrung 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 disain 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 to 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 too great for your limited tolerance, and so he irritates you both since he can do nothing 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 torturer 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 matrimonies were 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 matrimonies.

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 protestantic 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.