

***Richard III***  
Act I, Scene II

By William Shakespeare  
Adapted for Live-Stream Theatre by Lauren Lynch

Lady Anne is mourning the loss of her husband, King Henry, when she is interrupted with a video call from Richard (Gloucester) whom Lady Anne believes murdered her husband.

**LADY ANNE**

*(She answers the call, astounded by the audacity of it)*

Villain, thou know'st no law of God nor man:  
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.

**GLOUCESTER**

But I know none, and therefore am no beast.

**LADY ANNE**

O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!

**GLOUCESTER**

More wonderful, when angels are so angry.  
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,  
Of these supposed-evils, to give me leave,  
By circumstance, but to acquit myself.

**LADY ANNE**

Vouchsafe, defused infection of a man,  
For these known evils, but to give me leave,  
By circumstance, to curse thy cursed self.

**GLOUCESTER**

Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have  
Some patient leisure to excuse myself.

*(Begins to hang up, but waits briefly to hear her reply)*

**LADY ANNE**

Fouler than heart can think thee, thou canst make  
No excuse current, but to hang thyself.

*(She hangs up on him to beat him to it; he immediately calls her back)*

**GLOUCESTER**

By such despair, I should accuse myself.

**LADY ANNE**

And, by despairing, shouldst thou stand excused;  
For doing worthy vengeance on thyself,  
Which didst unworthy slaughter upon others.

**GLOUCESTER**

Say that I slew them not?

**LADY ANNE**

Why, then they are not dead:  
But dead they are, and devilish slave, by thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

I did not kill your husband.

**LADY ANNE**

Why, then he is alive.

**GLOUCESTER**

Nay, he is dead; and slain by Edward's hand.

**LADY ANNE**

In thy foul throat thou liest: Queen Margaret saw  
Thy murderous falchion smoking in his blood;  
The which thou once didst bend against her breast,  
But that thy brothers beat aside the point.

**GLOUCESTER**

I was provoked by her slanderous tongue,  
which laid their guilt upon my guiltless shoulders.

**LADY ANNE**

Thou wast provoked by thy bloody mind.  
Which never dreamt on aught but butcheries:  
Didst thou not kill this king?

**GLOUCESTER**

I grant ye.

**LADY ANNE**

Dost grant me, hedgehog? then, God grant me too  
Thou mayst be damned for that wicked deed!  
O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous!

**GLOUCESTER**

The fitter for the King of heaven, that hath him.

**LADY ANNE**

He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let him thank me, that help to send him thither;  
For he was fitter for that place than earth.

**LADY ANNE**

And thou unfit for any place but hell.

**GLOUCESTER**

Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.

**LADY ANNE**

Some dungeon.

**GLOUCESTER**

Your bed-chamber.

*(Lady Anne moves so that her bed is no longer visible in the background)*

**LADY ANNE**

I'll rest betide the chamber where thou liest!

**GLOUCESTER**

So will it, madam till I lie with you.

**LADY ANNE**

I hope so.

**GLOUCESTER**

I know so. But, gentle Lady Anne,  
To leave this keen encounter of our wits,  
And fall somewhat into a slower method,  
Is not the causer of the timeless deaths  
Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,  
As blameful as the executioner?

**LADY ANNE**

Thou art the cause, and most accursed effect.

**GLOUCESTER**

Your beauty was the cause of that effect;  
Your beauty: which did haunt me in my sleep  
To undertake the death of all the world,  
So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.

**LADY ANNE**

If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide,  
These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks.

**GLOUCESTER**

These eyes could never endure sweet beauty's wreck;  
You should not blemish it, if I stood by:  
As all the world is cheered by the sun,  
So I by that; it is my day, my life.

*(If your video service has filters available, feel free to find an “ugly” one for lady Anne to use at some point in the line above)*

**LADY ANNE**

Black night o'ershade thy day, and death thy life!

**GLOUCESTER**

Curse not thyself, fair creature thou art both.

**LADY ANNE**

I would I were, to be revenged on thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

It is a quarrel most unnatural,  
To be revenged on him that loveth you.

**LADY ANNE**

It is a quarrel just and reasonable,  
To be revenged on him that slew my husband.

**GLOUCESTER**

He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband,  
Did it to help thee to a better husband.

*(If Lady Anne has a filter on, she would take it off here)*

**LADY ANNE**

His better doth not breathe upon the earth.

**GLOUCESTER**

He lives that loves thee better than he could.

**LADY ANNE**

Name him.

**GLOUCESTER**

Plantagenet.

**LADY ANNE**

Why, that was he.

**GLOUCESTER**

The selfsame name, but one of better nature.

**LADY ANNE**

Where is he?

**GLOUCESTER**

Here.

*(Enraged, she reacts and hangs up on him)*

End of Scene.