

DIALOGUE SAMPLE ONLY

Play title: (These Matters Be) Kynges Games

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HENRY VI

This is my second time deposed. And for what? It's a job where you worry all the time about the kingdom—or you should if you are a benevolent man and have a godly conscience. And, on top of that, you worry about making it to bedtime alive or waking up with a sword point at your throat. Hardly worth it, it seems. The lengths that people will go to in order to be king. Battle after battle, hundreds killed and maimed, all so one man can rule.

RICHARD

Better my brother than I, I say.

HENRY VI

Oh, posh.

RICHARD

You doubt me?

HENRY VI

I do. I see it in your eyes.

RICHARD

Then you see something that I myself do not know is there.

HENRY VI

Young man, learn this now: everybody wants to be king. Everybody. But few of them know why. What would you do if you had the chance to be king? How does my head look?

RICHARD

Lined, withered, sick, old.

HENRY VI

Now think of it with a crown on it! Looks much better, does it not? It is the crown that matters. The crown and who wears it. I was born to be king. Literally. Not due to any natural acumen or lust for the throne, but only because I issued forth from the union of a certain man and woman. Expelled from the womb, covered in blood, into history. A great nuisance for all.

RICHARD

Nuisance?

HENRY VI

Think of it. God, who chooses kings, has caused me to be king twice.

RICHARD

And then by defeating your army, caused my brother Edward, not you, to be king. Twice.

HENRY VI

Exactly. Now answer me this. Why do you think God changed his mind? Did he look at me and say, "Now there is a truly useless man"? Does it make sense for an omnipotent deity to change his mind? Is this not heresy?

RICHARD

Maybe you should never have been king.

HENRY VI

I have never really felt like a king. My wife, on the other hand, most definitely has; a more enthusiastic king than I ever was. But, for ill or good...ill, I think, I was put on the throne. God's bad joke. If I still had the crown, I might wish to hand it over to someone with more eagerness to rule. You, perhaps. I might say to you, in your brashness, vigor, and youth, do you want to be king?

RICHARD

It is not my destiny. I was born the eighth male¹ from my mother. It suits me.

HENRY VI

You may have been born the eighth, but unless my mind has wandered off again, I see that five of those eight are now with God. I may stumble to and fro across the field of nightmares, but I know very well who you are. But I warn you. Think! Do not set your store in absolutes. There are none. Your youthful vigor seems boundless, but that is only because you have not traveled your lot. Spirit and bravery fill the place in your brain where wisdom has yet to inhabit. You are a youth of what, eighteen?

RICHARD

Eighteen and a half.

HENRY VI

A major distinction. Respect my words, young sir. You may be a duke, but you are still a young man who needs to see more of the world and hear the thoughts of men. It is the mysterious will of God that things change. Only time itself is the ultimate winner; and it unerringly makes fools of every one of us. You know of the French girl Joan?

RICHARD

It was said she spoke the words of God.

HENRY VI

Then when it no longer suited men's needs to have her speak the words of God, they called her the mouth of Satan and burned her at the stake. I was 10 years old. I watched it.

RICHARD

God has all the answers. We are here only to obey his will.

HENRY VI

Fah! What bloody good is that? He's not here, is he? Oh, I'll have to say an extra month's penance for that one.

¹ Harry 1441, Edward (E4) 1442, Edmund (Rutland) 1443, William 1447, John 1448, George (Clarence) 1449, Thomas 1451.

RICHARD

Perhaps [Joan was not what she seemed at first.]

HENRY VI

My father shat himself to death. Right at the pinnacle of his career. Henry the fifth, the strongest king England has seen in years, brought down by a river of liquid shit. Why would God do that?

RICHARD

Maybe you will find out soon.

HENRY VI

I've always considered a true answer as a symbol of respect. This should be the test of all rulers: Would you rather know the truth or believe a lie that brings you comfort?

RICHARD

You would have been better off as a cleric. I would have liked you as my priest.

HENRY VI

I have had visions, things revealed to me through God's grace. In the battle of St. Albans I sat under a beautiful tree, with the whole magnificent and bloody scene spread out before me. A great ruckus of men smashing each other's bodies with swords and maces and halberds...I saw angels dancing among them. There were uncountably many and it was a wonderful dance!

Whenever a man fell, several angels would swoop down upon his body and raise his spirit up into the air. And the spirit would look down at where he had been, then begin to laugh, because where there had been pain and sorrow, was now great joy. The angels floated and played about on the very heat of the spilled blood and sweat of the men fighting below them. And I laughed, too, because I could see God's joy. Do you think I will hear mass every day, as I used to the last time I was a guest here? They would bring me wine, too. It was quite the life. No bother to anyone. I used to walk the hall and peep into people's rooms. So many rooms, so many people, engaging in fleshy practices. Sometimes it was as if I was there with them because when they...they... Where is my wife? Is she dead?

RICHARD

No.

HENRY VI

Too bad. And I am no longer king?

RICHARD

No.

HENRY VI

Good. Can you promise me that I will never be king again?

RICHARD

I will personally guarantee that you are forever freed of that burden.

HENRY VI

All my life I've tried to be close to God. Maybe now he will grant my wish.

[HENRY kneels at his bedside to pray, removing his stocking cap.]

RICHARD

Well, then maybe I do fit into God's plan, after all.

[RICHARD raises a cudgel and prepares to strike Henry as the lights go down. Lights slowly rise. EXECUTIONER crosses stage, puts a stocking cap the on hat rack, exits.]