

Henry VI, part 2

by William Shakespeare

Act 1, sc. 2 (line 1 - Verse - Intercut)

Eleanor

Why droops my lord, like over-ripen'd corn,
Hanging the head at Ceres' plenteous load?
Why doth the great Duke Humphrey knit his brows,
As frowning at the favours of the world?
Why are thine eyes fixed to the sullen earth,
Gazing on that which seems to dim thy sight?
What seest thou there? King Henry's diadem,
Enchased with all the honours of the world?
If so, gaze on, and grovel on thy face,
Until thy head be circled with the same.
Put forth thy hand, reach at the glorious gold.
What, is't too short? I'll lengthen it with mine:
And, having both together heaved it up,
We'll both together lift our heads to heaven,
And never more abase our sight so low
As to vouchsafe one glance unto the ground.

GLOUCESTER

*O Nell, sweet Nell, if thou dost love thy lord,
Banish the canker of ambitious thoughts.
And may that thought, when I imagine ill
Against my king and nephew, virtuous Henry,
Be my last breathing in this mortal world!
My troublous dream this night doth make me sad.*

ELEANOR

What dream'd my lord? tell me, and I'll requite it
With sweet rehearsal of my morning's dream.

GLOUCESTER

*Methought this staff, mine office-badge in court,
Was broke in twain; by whom I have forgot,
But, as I think, it was by the cardinal;
And on the pieces of the broken wand
Were placed the heads of Edmund Duke of Somerset,
And William de la Pole, first duke of Suffolk.
This was my dream: what it doth bode, God knows.*

ELEANOR

Tut, this was nothing but an argument

That he that breaks a stick of Gloucester's grove

Shall lose his head for his presumption.

But list to me, my Humphrey, my sweet duke:

Methought I sat in seat of majesty

In the cathedral church of Westminster,

And in that chair where kings and queens are crown'd;

Where Henry and dame Margaret kneel'd to me

And on my head did set the diadem.

GLOUCESTER

*Nay, Eleanor, then must I chide outright:
Presumptuous dame, ill-nurtured Eleanor,
Art thou not second woman in the realm,
And the protector's wife, beloved of him?
Hast thou not worldly pleasure at command,
Above the reach or compass of thy thought?
And wilt thou still be hammering treachery,
To tumble down thy husband and thyself
From top of honour to disgrace's feet?
Away from me, and let me hear no more!*

ELEANOR

What, what, my lord! are you so choleric

With Eleanor, for telling but her dream?

Next time I'll keep my dreams unto myself,

And not be cheque'd.