ACT ONE, Scene 1

SIGN: LONDON—A STREET. THE KING RAISES GAVESTON TO HIGH STATION. THIS OFFENDS, BISHOPS, EARLS AND BARONS ALL.

(A coffin is upstage. Enter Gaveston, reading a letter.)

GAVESTON: “My father is deceased. Come, Gaveston, And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend.”
Ah, words that make me surfeit with delight!
What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston
Than live and be the favorite of a king?
The sight of London to my exiled eyes
Is as Elysium to a new-come soul;
Not that I love the city, or the men,
But that it harbors him I hold so dear,
The King, upon whose bosom let me die,
And with the world be still at enmity.
Farewell base stooping to the lordly peers.
My knee shall bow to none but to the King.
As for the multitude that are but sparks,
Raked up in embers of their poverty—
Tanti! I’ll fawn first on the wind
That glanceth at my lips, and flieth away.
I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
Musicians, that with touching of a string
May draw the pliant King which way I please.
Music and poetry is his delight;
Therefore I’ll have Italian masks by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows;
And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,
Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad;
My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawn,
Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay.
Such things as these best please his majesty,
My lord. Here comes the King and the nobles
From the parliament. I’ll stand aside.
(Retires. Enter the King, Two Guards, Lancaster, Kent, Warwick, Pembroke.)

KING: Lancaster!

LANCASTER: My lord.

GAVESTON: (Aside.) That Earl of Lancaster do I abhore.

KING: Will you not grant me this? (Aside.) In spite of them
I'll have my will; and this Lancaster,
That crosses me thus, shall know I am displeased.

LANCASTER: If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston.

GAVESTON: (Aside.) That villain Lancaster: I'll be his death.

WARWICK: Mine uncle, this earl, and I myself,
Were sworn to your father at his death,
That he should ne’er return into the realm:
And know, my lord, ere I will break my oath,
This sword of mine, that should offend your foes,
Shall sleep within the scabbard at thy need,
And underneath thy banners march who will,
For Warwick will hang his armor up.

GAVESTON (Aside.) Mort Dieu!

KING: Well, Warwick, I'll make thee rue these words.
I will have Gaveston; and you shall know
What danger ‘tis to stand against your King.

GAVESTON: (Aside.) Well done, Ned!

LANCASTER: My lord, why do you thus incense your peers,
That naturally would love and honor you
But for that base and obscure Gaveston?
Four earldoms have I, besides Lancaster,
These will I sell, to give my solders pay,
Ere Gaveston shall stay within the realm.

KENT: Barons and earls, your pride hath made me mute;
Dare you brave the King unto his face?
Brother, revenge it, and let these their heads
Preach upon poles, for trespass of their tongues.

PEMBROKE: Oh, our heads!

KING: Ay, yours; and therefore I would wish you grant—

WARWICK: I cannot, nor I will not; I must speak.
Cousin, our hands I hope shall fence our heads,
And strike off his that makes you threaten us.
Come, let us leave the brain-sick King,
And henceforth parley with our naked swords.
LANCASTER: Adieu, my lord; and either change your mind,  
Or look to see the throne, where you should sit,  
To float in blood, and at thy wanton head,  
The glozing head of thy base minion thrown.

(Exeunt Warwick, Pembroke, Lancaster.)

KING: I cannot brook these haughty menaces;  
Am I a king, and must be overruled?  
Brother, display my ensigns in the field;  
I’ll bandy with the barons and the earls,  
And either die, or live with Gaveston.

GAVESTON: I can no longer keep me from my lord.

KING: What, Gaveston! Welcome!—Kiss not my hand,  
Embrace me, Gaveston, as I do thee.  
Why shouldst thou kneel? Knowest thou not who I am?  
Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston!

GAVESTON: Since I went from hence, no soul in hell  
Hath felt more torment than poor Gaveston.

KING: I know it. Brother, welcome home, my friend.  
Now let the treacherous barons conspire,  
And that high-minded Earl of Lancaster:  
I have my wish, in that I joy thy sight;  
And sooner shall the sea o’erwhelm my land  
Than bear the ship that shall transport thee hence.  
I here create thee Lord High Chamberlain,  
Chief Secretary to the state and me,  
Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man.

GAVESTON: My lord, these titles far exceed my worth.

KENT: Brother, the least of these may well suffice  
For one of greater birth than Gaveston.

KING: Cease, brother, for I cannot brook these words.  
Thy worth, sweet friend, is far above my gifts,  
Therefore, to equal it, receive my heart;  
If for these dignities thou be envied,  
I’ll give thee more; for, but to honor thee,  
Is Edward pleased with kingly regiment.  
Fearst thou thy person? Thou shalt have a guard:  
Wantst thou gold? Go to my treasury:
Wouldst thou be loved and feared? Receive my seal;  
Save or condemn, and in our name command  
Whatso thy mind affects, or fancy likes.

GAVESTON: It shall suffice me to enjoy your love.

(Enter Bishop of Coventry.)

KING: Whither goes the Bishop of Coventry so fast?

COVENTRY: To celebrate your father’s exequies.  
But is that wicked Gaveston returned?

KING: Ay, priest, and lives to be revenged on thee.  
Throw off his golden miter, rend his stole,  
And in the channel christen him anew.

KENT: Ah, brother, lay not violent hands on him!  
For he’ll complain unto the see of Rome.

GAVESTON: Let him complain unto the see of hell;  
I’ll be revenged on him for my exile.

KING: No, spare his life, but seize upon his goods:  
Be thou lord bishop and receive his rents,  
And make him serve thee as thy chaplain:  
I give him thee—here, use him as thou wilt.

GAVESTON: He shall to prison, and there die in bolts.

KING: Ay, to the Tower, the Fleet, or where thou wilt.

COVENTRY: For this offense, be thou accurst of God!

KING: But in the meantime, Gaveston, away,  
And take possession of his house and goods.  
Come, follow me, and thou shalt have my guard  
To see it done, and bring thee safe again.  
(Exeunt King, Guards, Bishop of Coventry.  Gaveston tarries at side of stage.)

GAVESTON: The mighty Earl of Lancaster,  
That hath more earldoms than an ass can bear,  
And both Warwick and Pembroke, two goodly men,  
Are gone towards Lambeth to meet with Mortimer,  
that redoubted knight. There let them remain.  
(Exit.)
ACT ONE, scene two

SIGN: WESTMINSTER—A ROOM. THE BARONS FORCE THE KING TO BANISH HIS MINION.

(Enter, Pembroke, Warwick to a table.)

WARWICK: ‘Tis true, the bishop is in the Tower, And goods and body given to Gaveston.

PEMBROKE: What! Will they tyrannize upon the Church?

WARWICK: Well, let that peevish Frenchman guard him sure; Unless his breast be sword-proof he shall die.

(Enter Lancaster.)

LANCASTER: That villain Gaveston is made an earl.

WARWICK: Ay, and besides Lord Chamberlain of the realm, And Secretary, too, and Lord of Man.

PEMBROKE: We may not, nor we will not suffer this.

LANCASTER: “My Lord of Cornwall,” now as every word! And happy is the man whom he vouchsafes, For vailing of his bonnet, one good look. Thus, arm in arm, the King and he doth march: Nay more, the guard upon his lordship waits; And all the court begins to flatter him.

WARWICK: Thus leaning on the shoulder of the King, He nods, and scorns, and smiles at those that pass.

PEMBROKE: Doth no man take exceptions at the slave?

LANCASTER: All stomach him, but none dare speak a word.

WARWICK: Ah, that bewrays their baseness, Lancaster! Were all the earls and barons of my mind, We’ll hale him from the bosom of the King, And at the court-gate hang the peasant up, Who, swoln with venom of ambitious pride, Will be the ruin of the realm and us. Why post we not from hence to levy men?
(Enter Archbishop of Canterbury, servant and Mortimer, who is reading.)

PEMBROKE: Here comes my lord of Canterbury’s grace.

LANCASTER: My lord, will you take arms against the King?

CANTERBURY: What need I? God himself is up in arms
When violence is offered to the church.

WARWICK: Then will you join with us, that be his peers,
To banish or behead that Gaveston?

CANTERBURY: What else, my lords? For it concerns me near;
The bishopric of Coventry is his.

MORTIMER: Plutarch relates that Gaius Julius Caesar
Could read and write, and dictate all at once,
And beat the Gauls as well. Men of his tamp,
Would seem to draw their fame from a peculiar
Absence of insight into the futility
Of human affairs, compounded with
An amazing lack of gravity: in short,
From their superficiality.

CANTERBURY: While in seclusion, Mortimer, you wallow
In classics, and meditate on bygone times.
London, at present, seethes like a roused-up anthill,
And needs you.

MORTIMER: Pah! London has no need for me!
London’s greengrocers shout for grain.

CANTERBURY: If God the Father should let a hundred swine
Die in St. James’s Hospital for lack
Of grain, you may be certain, Mortimer,
We would not take you from your books for that.
But when one special swine grows fat in Westminster,
Suckled upon the nation’s milk, by the man
Who should be the nation’s guardian; the King,
Then I believe it’s time to let the classics be classics.

MORTIMER: The classics tell us that Alexander the Great
Loved his Hephaestion; that wise Socrates
Loved Alcibiades; that Achilles sickened
For Patroclus. Why then should I,
For a mere sport of nature show myself
To the sweaty rabble in the marketplace?

(Enter Queen Isabella.)

Madam, whither walks your majesty so fast?

QUEEN: Unto the forest, gentle Mortimer,
To live in grief and baleful discontent;
For now my lord the King regards me not,
But dotes upon the love of Gaveston.
He claps his cheeks, and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face, and whispers in his ears;
And when I come, he frowns, as who should say,
Go whither thou wilt, seeing I have Gaveston.

PEMBROKE: Madam, return unto the court again;
Thy sly inveigling Frenchman we’ll exile,
For we have power,
And courage, too, to be revenged at full.

CANTERBURY: But yet lift not your swords against the King.

LANCASTER: No; but we’ll lift Gaveston from hence.

WARWICK: And war must be the means, or he’ll stay still.

QUEEN: Then let him stay; for rather than my lord
Shall be oppressed by civil mutinies,
I will endure a melancholy life,
And let him frolic with his minion.

CANTERBURY: My lords, to ease all this, but hear me speak:
We and the rest that are his counselors
Will with a general consent,
Confirm his banishment with our hands and seals.

LANCASTER: What we confirm the King will frustrate.

MORTIMER: Then may we lawfully revolt from him.

CANTERBURY: Here is the form of Gaveston’s exile:
May it please your lordships to subscribe your name.

WARWICK: Give me the paper. (Signs.)

LANCASTER: Quick, quick, my lord; I long to write my name. (Signs.)

WARWICK: But I long more to see him banished hence.
PEMBROKE: What man of noble birth can brook the sight of him? Can kingly lions fawn on creeping ants? (Signs and offers document to Mortimer.)

LANCASTER: Their downfall is at hand, their forces down: We will not thus be faced and over-peered.

MORTIMER: The name of Mortimer shall fright the King, Unless he be declined from the base peasant. (Takes document and signs.)

(Enter King, Two Guards, Gaveston and Kent.)

KING: Lay hands on that traitor Mortimer!

PEMBROKE: Lay hands on that traitor Gaveston!

(A scuffle ensues that ends with Gaveston held by the nobles.)

KENT: Is this the duty that you owe your King?

WARWICK: We know our duties, let him know his peers.

KING: Whither will you bear him? Stay, or ye shall die.

PEMBROKE: We are no traitors; therefore threaten not.

GAVESTON: No, threaten not, my lord, but pay them home! Were I a king—

MORTIMER: Thou villain, wherefore talks thou of a king, That hardly art a gentleman by birth?

KING: Were he a peasant, being my minion, I’ll make the proudest of you stoop to him.

LANCASTER: My lord, you may not thus disparage us. Away, I say, with hateful Gaveston!

PEMBROKE: And with the Earl of Kent that favors him.

(Pembroke and Canterbury remove Guards, Kent and Gaveston.)

KING: Nay, then lay violent hands upon your King, Mortimer, sit thou in Edward’s throne: Warwick and Lancaster, wear you my crown: Was ever king thus over-ruled as I?
LANCASTER: Learn then to rule us better, and the realm.

MORTIMER: What we have done, our heart-blood shall maintain.

*(Pembroke and Canterbury return.)*

WARWICK: Think you that we can brook this upstart pride?

KING: Anger and wrathful fury stops my speech.

CANTERBURY: Why are you moved? Be patient, my lord, And see what we, your counselors, have done.

*(Canterbury hands the petition to the King.)*

KING: Meet you for this, proud overdaring peers?

CANTERBURY: You know that I am legate to the Pope; On your allegiance to the see of Rome, Subscribe as we have done to his exile.

PEMBROKE: Curse him, if he refuse; and then may we Depose him and elect another king.

KING: Ay, there it goes: but yet I will not yield: Curse me, depose me, do the worst you can.

LANCASTER: Then linger not, my lord, but do it straight.

CANTERBURY: Remember how the bishop was abused: Either banish him that was the cause thereof, Or I will presently discharge these lords Of duty and allegiance due to thee.

KING: It boots me not to threat; I must speak fair: The legate of the Pope will be obeyed. Make several kingdoms of this monarchy, And share it equally amongst you all, So I may have some nook or corner left, To frolic with my dearest Gaveston.

MORTIMER: Why should you love him whom the world hates so?

KING: Because he loves me more than all the world. Ah, none but rude and savage-minded men
Would seek the ruin of my Gaveston;
You that be noble-born should pity him.

WARWICK: You that are princely-born should shake him off:
For shame subscribe, and let the lown depart.

PEMBROKE: Urge him, my lord.

CANTERBURY: Are you content to banish him the realm?
Nothing shall alter us; we are resolved.

LANCASTER: Come, come, subscribe.

MORTIMER: Sign your name to the banishment
Of Piers Gaveston, son of a butcher in London city,
Banished long years ago by parliament;
Returned illegally, and now, Banished again,
By the parliament and your peers. Sign, sire!

KING: I see I must, and therefore am content:
Instead of ink I’ll write it with my tears.

(The King signs the petition.)

WARWICK: The King is love-sick for his minion.

KING: ‘Tis done, and now, accursed hand, fall off!

LANCASTER: Give it me; I’ll have it published in the streets.

MORTIMER: I’ll see him presently dispatched away. (Exit.)

CANTERBURY: Now is my heart at ease.

WARWICK: And so is mine. (Exit.)

PEMBROKE: This will be good news to the common sort. (Exit.)

(Exeunt Lancaster, Canterbury and servant.)

KING: How fast they run to banish him I love.
They would not stir, were it to do me good.
Why should a king be subject to a priest?
Proud Rome, that hatchest such imperial grooms,
I’ll fire thy crazed buildings, and enforce
The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground.
As for the peers, that back the clergy thus,
If I be King, not one of them shall live.

(Exit King. Enter Mortimer to Queen, who has been weeping.)

MORTIMER: Because a few have groveled before a dog,
The men of England are preparing
To hurl their island into the abyss.

(They exit together. “Gaveston banished!” shouted through the theatre by Warwick, Pembroke, Lancaster. Table is removed.)
ACT ONE, scene three

SIGN: WESTMINSTER—THE PALACE. THE BARONS ALLOW GAVESTON TO RETURN. THE KING BETROTHES GAVESTON TO HIS ROYAL COUSIN, MARGARET.

(King is onstage weeping. Enter Gaveston.)

GAVESTON: My lord, I hear it whispered everywhere,
That I am banished, and must fly the land.

KING: ‘Tis true, sweet Gaveston—Oh! Were it false!
The legate of the Pope will have it so,
And thou must hence, or I shall be deposed.
But I will reign to be revenged of them;
And therefore, sweet friend, take it patiently.
Live where thou wilt, I’ll send thee gold enough;
And long thou shalt not stay, or if thou dost,
I’ll come to thee; my love shall ne’er decline.

GAVESTON: Is all my hope turned to this hell of grief?

KING: Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words:

GAVESTON: To go from hence grieves not poor Gaveston;
But to forsake you, in whose gracious looks
The blessedness of Gaveston remains.

KING: And only this torments my wretched soul,
That, whether I will or no, thou must depart.
Be Governor of Ireland in my stead,
And there abide till fortune call thee home.
Here take my picture, and let me wear thine;
(They exchange pictures.)
Oh, might I keep thee here as I do this,
Happy were I: but now most miserable.

GAVESTON: ‘Tis something to be pitied of a king.

KING: Thou shalt not hence; I’ll hide thee, Gaveston.

GAVESTON: I shall be found, and then ‘twill grieve me more.

KING: Kind words and mutual talk makes our grief greater:
Therefore, with dumb embracement, let us part—
Stay, Gaveston, I cannot leave thee thus.
GAVESTON: For every look, my lord drops down a tear: 
Seeing I must go, do not renew my sorrow.

KING: The time is little that thou hast to stay, 
And therefore give me leave to look my fill: 
But come, sweet friend, I’ll bear thee on thy way.

GAVESTON: The peers will frown.

KING: I pass not for their anger. Come, let’s go. 
Oh, that we might as well return as go.

(Enter Queen Isabella.)

QUEEN: Whither goes my lord?

KING: Fawn not on me, French strumpet; get thee gone.

QUEEN: On whom but on my husband should I fawn?

GAVESTON: On Mortimer, with whom, ungentle Queen— 
I say no more, judge you the rest, my lord.

QUEEN: In saying this, thou wrongst me, Gaveston; 
Is’t not enough that thou corrupts my lord, 
And art a bawd to his affections, 
But thou must call mine honor thus in question?

GAVESTON: I mean not so; your grace must pardon me.

KING: Thou art too familiar with that Mortimer, 
And by thy means is Gaveston exiled; 
But I would wish thee reconcile the lords, 
Or thou shalt ne’er be reconciled to me.

QUEEN: Your highness knows it lies not in my power.

KING: Away then; touch me not. Come, Gaveston.

QUEEN: Villain! ‘Tis you that robbst me of my lord.

GAVESTON: Madam, ‘tis you that rob me of my lord.

KING: Speak not unto her; let her droop and pine.
QUEEN: Wherein, my lord, have I deserved these words?
Witness the tears that Isabella sheds,
Witness this heart, that, sighing for thee, breaks
How dear my lord is to poor Isabel.

KING: And witness heaven how dear thou art to me.
There weep: for till my Gaveston be repealed,
Assure thyself thou com’st not in my sight.

(Exeunt King and Gaveston.)

QUEEN: O miserable and distressed Queen!
Like frantic Juno will I fill the earth
With ghastly murmur of my sighs and cries;
For never doted Jove on Ganymede
So much as he on cursed Gaveston;
But that will more exasperate his wrath;
I must entreat him, I must speak him fair;
And be a means to call home Gaveston:
And yet he’ll ever dote on Gaveston;
And so am I forever miserable.

(Enter the nobles to the Queen.)

LANCASTER: Look where the sister of the King of France
Sits wringing of her hands, and beats her breast!

WARWICK: The King, I fear, hath ill treated her.

PEMBROKE: Hard is the heart that injures such a saint.

MORTIMER: Madam, how fares you grace?

QUEEN: Ah, Mortimer! Now breaks the King’s hate forth,
And he confesseth that he loves me not.

MORTIMER: Cry quittance, madam, then; and love not him.

QUEEN: No, rather will I die a thousand deaths:
And yet I love in vain; he’ll ne’er love me.

MORTIMER: Fear ye not, madam; now his minion’s gone,
His wanton humor will be quickly left.

QUEEN: Oh, never, Lancaster! I am enjoined
To sue unto you all for his repeal;
This wills my lord, and this must I perform
Or else be banished from his highness’ presence.

LANCASTER: For his repeal, madam! He comes not back,
Unless the sea cast up his shipwracked body.

WARWICK: And to behold so sweet a sight as that,
There’s none here but would run his horse to death.

MORTIMERO: But, madam, would you have us call him home?

QUEEN: Ay, Mortimer, for till he be restored,
The angry King hath banished me the court;
And therefore, as thou lovest and tendrest me,
Be thou my advocate unto these peers.

MORTIMERO: What, would ye have me plead for Gaveston?

PEMBROKE: Plead for him he that will, I am resolved.

LANCASTER: And so am I, my lord: dissuade the Queen.

QUEEN: O Lancaster, let him dissuade the King,
For ‘tis against my will he should return.

WARWICK: Then speak not for him, let the peasant go.

QUEEN: ‘Tis for myself I speak, and not for him.

PEMBROKE: No speaking will prevail, and therefore cease.

QUEEN: Sweet Mortimer, sit down by me awhile,
And I will tell thee reasons of such weight
As thou wilt soon subscribe to his repeal.

MORTIMERO: It is impossible; but speak your mind.

QUEEN: Then thus, but none shall hear it but ourselves.

(She talks to Mortimer apart from the others.)

LANCASTER: My lords, albeit the Queen win Mortimer,
Will you be resolute and hold with me?

PEMBROKE: Fear not, the Queen’s words cannot alter him.
WARWICK: No? Do but mark how earnestly she pleads.

LANCASTER: And see how coldly his looks make denial.

WARWICK: She smiles; now for my life his mind is changed.

LANCASTER: I'll rather lose his friendship, I, than grant.

MORTIMER: My Lords, that I abhor base Gaveston,
I hope your honors make no question,
And therefore, though I plead for his repeal—

LANCASTER: Fie, Mortimer, dishonor not thyself!

QUEEN: Yet, good my lord, hear what he can allege.

WARWICK: All that he speaks is nothing; we are resolved.

MORTIMER: Do you not wish that Gaveston were dead?

PEMBROKE: I would he were.

MORTIMER: Why then, my lord, give me but leave to speak.
This which I urge is of a burning zeal
To mend the King, and do our country good.
Know you not Gaveston hath store of gold,
Which may in Ireland purchase him such friends
As he will front the mightiest of us all?
And whereas he shall live and be beloved,
'Tis hard for us to work his overthrow.

WARWICK: Mark you but that, my Lord of Lancaster.

MORTIMER: But were he here, detested as he is,
How easily might some base slave be suborned
To greet his lordship with a poniard.

PEMBROKE: He saith true.

LANCASTER: Ay, but how chance this was not done before?

MORTIMER: Because, my lords, it was not thought upon.
Nay, more, when he shall know it lies in us
To banish him and then to call him home,
'Twill make him fear to offend the meanest nobleman.
PEMBROKE: But how if he do not, cousin?

MORTIMER: Then may we with some color rise in arms;  
So we shall have the people of our side,  
And when the commons and the nobles join,  
‘Tis not the King can buckler Gaveston.  
My lords, if to perform this I be slack,  
Think me as base a groom as Gaveston.

LANCASTER: On that condition, Lancaster will grant.

WARWICK: And so will Pembroke and I.

MORTIMER: In this I count me highly gratified,  
And Mortimer will rest at your command.

QUEEN: And when this favor Isabel forgets,  
Then let her live abandoned and forlorn.  
But see, my lord the King  
Is new returned; this news will glad him much.

(Enter King murmuring.)

KING: He’s gone, and for his absence thus I mourn.  
Did never sorrow go so near my heart  
As doth the want of my sweet Gaveston.

QUEEN: Hark, how he harps upon his minion.

KING: My heart is as an anvil unto sorrow.  
And makes me frantic for my Gaveston.

LANCASTER: Diablo! What passions call you these?

KING: Ah, had some bloodless Fury rose from hell,  
And with my kingly scepter struck me dead,  
When I was forced to leave my Gaveston.

QUEEN: My gracious lord, I come to bring you news.

KING: That you have parlèd with your Mortimer.

QUEEN: That Gaveston, my lord, shall be repealed.

KING: Repealed! The news is too sweet to be true.
QUEEN: But will you love me, if you find it so?

KING: If it be so, what will not Edward do?
I’ll hang a golden tongue about thy neck,
Seeing thou hast pleaded with so good success.

QUEEN: No other jewels hang about my neck
Than these, my lord; nor let me have more wealth
Than I may fetch from this rich treasury;
Oh, how a kiss revives poor Isabel!

KING: Once more receive my hand, and let this be
A second marriage ‘twixt thyself and me.

QUEEN: And may it prove more happy than the first.
My gentle lord, bespeak these nobles fair,
That wait attendance for a gracious look,
And on their knees salute your majesty.

KING: Courageous Lancaster, embrace thy King.
Live thou with me as my companion.

LANCASTER: This salutation overjoys my heart.

KING: Warwick shall be my chiepest counselor.
Chide me, sweet Warwick, if I go astray.

WARWICK: Slay me, my lord, when I offend your grace.

KING: In solemn triumphs, and in public show,
Pembroke shall bear the sword before the King.

PEMBROKE: And with this sword Pembroke will fight for you.

KING: But wherefore walks young Mortimer aside?
Be thou commander of our royal fleet;
Or, if that lofty office like thee not,
I make thee here Lord Marshal of the realm.

MORTIMER: My lord, I’ll marshal so your enemies,
As England shall be quiet, and you safe.

QUEEN: Now is the King of England rich and strong,
Having the love of his renowned peers.

KING: Ay, Isabel, ne’er was my heart so light.
Clerk of the Crown, direct our warrant forth
For Gaveston to Ireland.
Lord Mortimer, we leave you to your charge.
Now let us in, and feast it royally
Against our friend Gaveston comes,
We’ll have a general tilt and tournament;
And then his marriage shall be solemnized.
For wot you not that I have made him sure
Unto Margaret, the Earl of Gloucester’s heir?

LANCASTER: Such news we hear, my lord.

KING: That day, if not for him, yet for my sake,
Spare for no cost; we will requite your love.

WARWICK: In this or aught your highness shall command us.

KING: Thanks, gentle Warwick: come, let’s in and revel.

(Exeunt all but Mortimer.)

MORTIMER: His wanton humor grieves not me;
But this I scorn, that one so basely born
Should by his sovereign’s favor grow so pert,
And riot it with the treasure of the realm,
While soldiers mutiny for want of pay.
He wears a lord’s revenue on his back,
And, Midas-like, he jets it in the court,
With base outlandish cullions as his heels.
While others walk below, the King and he
From out a window laugh at such as we,
And flout our train, and jest at our attire.
’Tis this that makes me impatient.
But while I have a sword, a hand, a heart,
I will not yield to any such upstart.

(Exit.)
ACT TWO, Scene One

SIGN:  GLOUCESTER CASTLE—A ROOM.  PRINCESS MARGARET REJOICES UPON HER BETROTHAL TO GAVESTON.

(Enter Spencer and Baldock to a table.)

BALDOCK:  Spencer, Seeing that our lord th’Earl of Gloucester’s dead, Which of the nobles doest thou mean to serve?

SPENCER:  Not Mortimer, nor any of his side; Because the King and he are enemies. The liberal Earl of Cornwall is the man On whose good fortune Spencer’s hope depends.

BALDOCK:  What, mean you then to be his follower?

SPENCER:  No, his companion; for he loves me well And would have once preferred me to the King.

BALDOCK:  But he is banished; there’s small hope of him.

SPENCER:  Ay, for a while; but, Baldock, mark the end. A friend of mine told me in secrecy That he’s repealed, and sent for back again; And even now a post came from the court With letters to our lady, Margaret, from the King; And as she reads she smiled, which makes me think It is about her lover Gaveston.

BALDOCK:  ‘Tis like enough; for since he was exiled She neither walks abroad, nor comes in sight. But I had thought the match had been broke off, And that his banishment had changed her mind.

SPENCER:  Our lady’s first love is not wavering; My life for thine she will have Gaveston.

(Enter Lady Margaret.)

MARGARET:  The grief for his exile was not so much, As is the joy of his returning home. This letter came from my sweet Gaveston: “I will not long be from thee, though I die.”— This argues the entire love of my lord; “When I forsake thee, death seize on my heart”—
But rest thee here where Gaveston shall sleep.

(Places the letter in her bosom.)

Now to the letter of my lord the King.
He wills me to repair unto the court,
And meet my Gaveston. Why do I stay,
Seeing that he talks thus of my marriage-day?
Who’s there? Baldock!
See that my coach be ready, I must hence.

BALDOCK: It shall be done, madam.

MARGARET: And meet me at the park-pale presently.

(Exit Baldock.)

Spencer, stay you and bear me company,
For I have joyful news to tell thee of;
My lord, Gaveston, is a-coming over,
And will be at the court as soon as we.

SPENCER: I knew the King would have him home again.

MARGARET: If all things sort out as I hope they will,
Thy service, Spencer, shall be thought upon.

SPENCER: I humbly thank you ladyship.

MARGARET: Come, lead the way; I long till I am there.

(Exeunt. Table is removed.)
ACT TWO, Scene two

SIGN: THE COAST—NEAR TYNEMOUTH CASTLE. GAVESTON RETURNS. REBELLION SOON FOLLOWS.

(Enter King, Two Servants, Queen, Lancaster, Mortimer, Warwick, Pembroke, Kent.)

KING: The wind is good, I wonder why he stays; I fear me he is wrecked upon the sea.

QUEEN: Look, Lancaster, how passionate he is, And still his mind runs on his minion.

LANCASTER: My lord—


WARWICK: Nothing but Gaveston! What means your grace?

MORTIMER: You have matters of more weight to think upon; The King of France sets foot in Normandy.

KING: A trifle! We’ll expel him when we please. Proud Mortimer! Ungentle Lancaster! Is this the love you bear your sovereign? Is this the fruit your reconcilement bears?

QUEEN: Sweet husband, be content, they all love you.

KING: They love me not that hate my Gaveston.

PEMBROKE: If in his absence thus he favors him, What will he do whenas he shall be present?

LANCASTER: That shall we see; look where his lordship comes.

(Enter Gaveston.)

KING: My Gaveston! Welcome to Tynemouth, welcome to thy friend! Thy absence made me droop and pine away.

GAVESTON: Sweet lord and King, your speech preventeth mine, Yet have I words left to express my joy: The shepherd nipped with biting winter’s rage Frolics not more to see the painted spring,
Than I do to behold your majesty.

KING: Will none of you salute my Gaveston?

LANCASTER: Salute him? Yes; welcome Lord Chamberlain.

MORTIMER: Welcome is the good Earl of Cornwall.

WARWICK: Welcome, Lord Governor of the Isle of Man.

PEMBROKE: Welcome, Master Secretary.

KENT: Brother, do you hear them?

KING: Still will these earls and barons use me thus?

GAVESTON: My lord, I cannot brook these injuries.

KING: Return it to their throats, I’ll be thy warrant.

GAVESTON: Base, leaden earls, that glory in your birth, 
Go sit at home and eat your tenant’s beef; 
And come not here to scoff at Gaveston.

LANCASTER: Yet I disdain not to do this for you. 
(Draws his sword.)

KING: Treason, treason!

MORTIMER: Villain, thy life, unless I miss mine aim.

(Wounds Gaveston.)

QUEEN: Ah, furious Mortimer, what hast thou done?

MORTIMER: No more than I would answer, were he slain.

(Gaveston is carried to the side by servants who provide medical treatment and a sling.)

KING: Dear shall you both aby this riotous deed. 
Out of my presence, come not near the court.

MORTIMER: I’ll not be barred the court for Gaveston.

LANCASTER: We’ll hale him by the ears unto the block.
KING: Look to your own heads; his is sure enough.

WARWICK: Look to your own crown, if you back him thus.

KENT: Warwick, these words do ill beseem thy years.

KING: Nay, all of them conspire to cross me thus; But if I live, I’ll tread upon their heads That think with high looks thus to tread me down.

LANCASTER: Your minion Gaveston hath taught you this.

KING: Shall I still be haunted thus?

MORTIMER: Nay, now you are here alone, I’ll speak my mind, And then, my lord, farewell. The idle triumphs, masks, lascivious shows, And prodigal gifts bestowed on Gaveston, Have drawn thy treasure dry, and made thee weak.

LANCASTER: Look for rebellion, look to be deposed; Thy garrisons are beaten out of France, Unto the walls of York the Scots made road, And unresisted drove away rich spoils.

MORTIMER: The haughty Dane commands the narrow seas, While in the harbor ride thy ships unrigged.

LANCASTER: What foreign prince sends thee ambassadors?

MORTIMER: Who loves thee, but a sort of flatterers?

LANCASTER: Thy gentle Queen, sole sister to Valois, Complains that thou hast left her all forlorn.

MORTIMER: Thy court is naked, being bereft of those That make a king seem glorious to the world; I mean the peers, whom thou shouldst dearly love.

LANCASTER: The Northern borderers seeing their houses burnt, Their wives and children slain, run up and down, Cursing the name of thee and Gaveston.

MORTIMER: When wert thou in the field with banner spread?

LANCASTER: If ye be moved, revenge it as you can;
Look next to see us with our ensigns spread.

(Exeunt nobles and Queen.)

KING: My swelling heart for very anger breaks.
How oft have I been baited by these peers?

KENT: My lord, I see your love to Gaveston
Will be the ruin of the realm and you,
For now the wrathful nobles threaten wars,
And therefore, brother, banish him forever.

KING: Art thou an enemy to my Gaveston?

KENT: Ay, and it grieves me that I favored him.

KING: Traitor, begone! Whine thou with Mortimer.

KENT: So will I, rather than with Gaveston.

KING: Out of my sight, and trouble me no more. Away!
(Exit Kent. King goes to Gaveston.)
Poor Gaveston, that hast no friend by me,
Do what they can, we’ll live in Tynemouth here.
What care I though the earls begirt us round?

(Enter Queen, Margaret, Spencer, Baldock.)

QUEEN: My lord, thus do you still suspect me without cause?

MARGARET: Sweet uncle, speak more kindly to the Queen.

GAVESTON: My lord, dissemble with her, speak her fair.

KING: Pardon me, sweet, I forgot myself.

QUEEN: Your pardon is quickly got of Isabel.

KING: The young Mortimer is grown so brave,
That to my face he threatens civil wars.

GAVESTON: Why do you not commit him to the Tower?

KING: I dare not, for the people love him well.

GAVESTON: Why, then we’ll have him privily made away.
KING: Would Lancaster and he hath both caroused
A bowl of poison to each other’s health.
But let them go, and tell me what are these.

MARGARET: Two of my father’s servants while he lived;
May’t please your grace to entertain them now?

KING: Tell me, where wast thou born? What is thine arms?

BALDOCK: My name is Baldock, and my gentry
I fetched from Oxford, not from heraldry.

KING: The fitter art thou, Baldock, for my turn.
Wait on me, and I’ll see thou shalt not want.

BALDOCK: I humbly thank your majesty.

KING: Knowest thou him, Gaveston?

GAVESTON: Ay, my lord;
His name is Spencer, he is well allied.

KING: Then, Spencer, wait upon me; for his sake
I’ll grace thee with a higher style ere long.

SPENCER: No greater titles happen unto me,
Than to be favored of your majesty.

KING: Cousin, this day shall be your marriage-feast.
And, Gaveston, think that I love thee well,
To wed thee to our niece, the only heir
Unto the Earl of Gloucester late deceased.
Come, let’s away; and when the marriage ends,
Have at the rebels, and their complices.

(Exeunt.)
ACT TWO, Scene three

SIGN: A FIELD NEAR TYNEMOUTH CASTLE—THE REBEL CAMP. KENT FORSAKES THE KING AND JOINS THE REBELS.

(Enter Lancaster, Mortimer, Warwick, Pembroke, to a bench. They are preparing for battle. Kent enters to them. The wedding occurs upstage in mime.)

KENT: My lords, of love to this our native land
I come to join with you and leave the King;
And in your quarrel and the realm’s behoof
Will be the first that shall adventure life.

LANCASTER: I fear me you are sent of policy,
To undermine us with a show of love.

WARWICK: He is your brother, therefore have we cause
To cast the worst, and doubt of your revolt.

KENT: Mine honor shall be hostage of my truth:
If that will not suffice, farewell, my lords.

MORTIMER: Stay, Kent, never was Plantagenet
False of his word, and therefore trust we thee.

KENT: Now, my lords, know this,
That Gaveston is secretly arrayed,
And here in Tynemouth frolics with the King.
Let us with these followers scale the walls,
And suddenly surprise them unawares.

MORTIMER: I’ll give the onset.

WARWICK: And I’ll follow thee.

MORTIMER: This tottered ensign of my ancestors,
Will I advance upon this castle’s walls.
Drums, strike alarum, raise them from their sport,
And ring aloud the knell of Gaveston.

LANCASTER: None be so hardy as to touch the King;
But neither spare you Gaveston nor his friends.

(Exeunt. Battle. Trumpets. Drums. The battle disrupts the mimed wedding.)
ACT TWO, Scene Four

SIGN: TYNEMOUTH CASTLE—A RAMPART. A BATTLE. THE KING’S FORCES ARE ROUTED.

(Enter King, Spencer.)

KING: Oh, tell me, Spencer, where is Gaveston?

SPENCER: I fear me his is slain, my gracious lord.

KING: No, here he comes; now let them spoil and kill.

(Enter Queen, Margaret, Gaveston.)

Fly, fly, my lord, the earls have got the hold; Take shipping and away to Scarborough; Spencer and I will post away by land.

GAVESTON: Oh, stay, my lord, they will not injure you.

KING: I will not trust them, Gaveston; away.

GAVESTON: Farewell, my lord.

KING: Lady, farewell.

MARGARET: Farewell, sweet uncle, till we meet again.

KING: Farewell, sweet Gaveston, and farewell, niece.

QUEEN: No farewell to poor Isabel thy Queen?

KING: Yes, yes, for Mortimer, your lover’s sake.

(Exeunt all but the Queen.)

QUEEN: From my embracements thus he breaks away. Oh, that mine arms could close this isle about.

(Trumpets. Drums. Alarums. Enter the Barons and Two Guards.)

LANCASTER: I wonder how he scaped?

MORTIMER: Who’s this? The Queen!

QUEEN: Ay, Mortimer, the miserable Queen. These hands are tired with haling of my lord From Gaveston, from wicked Gaveston, And all in vain; for, when I speak him fair,
He turns away, and smiles upon his minion.

MORTIMER: Cease to lament, and tell us where’s Gaveston?

QUEEN: He’s gone by water unto Scarborough; Pursue him quickly, and he cannot scape; The king hath left him, and his train is small.

WARWICK: Forslow no time; sweet Lancaster, let’s march.

(Exeunt Warwick, Pembroke, Lancaster, and Two Guards.)

MORTIMER: How comes it that the King and he is parted?

QUEEN: That this your army, going several ways, Might be of lesser force: and with the power That he intendeth presently to raise, Be easily suppressed; and therefore be gone.

MORTIMER: Madam, stay you within this castle here.

QUEEN: No, Mortimer, I’ll to my lord the King.

MORTIMER: Nay, rather sail with us to Scarborough.

QUEEN: You know the King is so suspicious, As if he hear I have but talked with you, Mine honor will be called into question; And therefore, gentle Mortimer, be gone.

MORTIMER: Madam, I cannot stay to answer you, But think of Mortimer as he deserves.

(Exeunt all but the Queen.)

QUEEN: So well hast thou deserved, sweet Mortimer, As Isabel could live with thee for ever. In vain I look for love at Edward’s hand, Whose eyes are fixed on none but Gaveston, Yet once more I’ll importune him with prayers: If he be strange and not regard my words, My son and I will over into France, And to the King my brother there complain, How Gaveston hath robbed me of his love: But yet I hope my sorrows will have end, And Gaveston this blessed day be slain.

(Exit.)
ACT TWO, Scene Five

SIGN: THE COAST—NEAR TYNEMOUTH CASTLE. THE BARONS KILL GAVESTON.

(Trumpets. Barking dogs. Enter Gaveston, pursued.)

GAVESTON: Yet, lusty lords, I have escaped your hands,
Your threats, your larums, and your hot pursuits;
And though divorced from King Edward’s eyes,
Yet liveth Pierce of Gaveston unsurprised,
Breathing, in hope
To see his royal sovereign once again.

(Enter Mortimer, Lancaster, Warwick, Pembroke, two guards.)

WARWICK: Upon him, soldiers, take away his weapons.

(They corner Gaveston.)

MORTIMER: Corrupter of thy King, cause of these broils,
Base flatterer, yield!

LANCASTER: Monster of men!
Look for no other fortune, wretch, than death.
King Edward is not here to buckler thee.

WARWICK: Lancaster, why talkst thou to the slave?
For, by my sword, his head shall off:
It is our country’s cause
That here severely we will execute him.

GAVESTON: My lord—

(They kill him. Dance of victory.)
ACT THREE, Scene One

SIGN: A FIELD IN YORKSHIRE—THE KING’S ENCAMPMENT. THE KING FINDS A NEW MINION. THEY DEFEAT THE REBELS.

(Enter King, Baldock and Servant to table and bench.)

KING: I long to hear an answer from the barons
Touching my friend, my dearest Gaveston. 
Ah, Baldock, not the riches of my realm 
Can ransom him; ah, my lovely Pierce, my Gaveston. 
The barons overbear me with their pride.

BALDOCK: My lord, pardon my speech: 
Did you retain your father’s magnanimity, 
Did you regard the honor of your name, 
You would not suffer thus your majesty 
Be counterbuft of your nobility. 
Strike off their heads, and let them preach on poles. 
No doubt, such lessons they will teach the rest, 
As by their preachments they will profit much, 
And learn obedience to their lawful King.

KING: Yea, gentle Baldock, we have been too mild, 
Too kind to them; but now have drawn our sword, 
And if they send me not my Gaveston, 
We’ll steel it on their crest, and poll their tops.

BALDOCK: This haughty resolve becomes your majesty, 
Not to be tied to their affection, 
As though your highness were a schoolboy still, 
And must be awed and governed like a child.

(Enter Spencer with Two Guards.)

SPENCER: Long live my sovereign, the noble Edward, 
In peace triumphant, fortunate in wars! 
The battle’s been in labor for many days; 
A painful birth: the armies look alike 
And both cry out St. George and England. 
Crying St. George, brother mangles brother. 
Army is meshed with army like twin salamanders, 
Knotted in strife. English villages burn. 
Our position fares not bad, less the peers 
Have taken Boroughbridge. The decisive day is near.
KING: Welcome, man, comest thou in Edward’s aid?

SPENCER: Lo, with a band of bowmen and of pikes, Brown bills and targeteers, four hundred strong, Sworn to defend King Edward’s royal right, I come in person to your majesty, Bound to your highness everlastingly, For favors done, in him, unto us all.

KING: Welcome ten thousand times, man, again. Spencer, this love, this kindness to thy King, Argues thy noble mind and disposition. Spencer, I here create thee Earl of Wiltshire, And daily will enrich thee with our favor, The more to manifest our love.

BALDOCK: My lord, here comes the Queen.

(Enter Queen and Prince Edward.)

KING: Madam, What news?

QUEEN: News of dishonor, lord, and discontent. That Lord Valois our brother, King of France, Because your highness hath been slack in homage, Hath seized Normandy into his hands.

KING: Tush, Sib, if this be all, Valois and I will soon be friends again. But to my Gaveston; shall I never see, Never behold thee now? Madam, in this matter, We will employ you and your little son; You shall go parley with the King of France. Boy, see you bear you bravely to the King, And do your message with a majesty.

PRINCE: Commit not to my youth things of more weight That fits a prince so young as I to bear, And fear not, lord and father, heaven’s great beams On Atlas’ shoulder shall not lie more safe, Than shall your charge committed to my trust.

QUEEN: Ah, boy! This towardness makes thy mother fear Thou art not marked to many days on earth.
KING: Madam, we will that you with speed be shipped, 
And this our son; 
Choose of our lords to bear you company; 
And go in peace, leave us in wars at home.

QUEEN: Unnatural wars, where subjects brave their King; 
God end them once! My lord, I take my leave, 
To make my preparation for France
(Queen sends Prince Edward off. She remains to speak in aside.)
Perhaps it’s for the best. But I am not 
The one to tell him that most likely 
His friend’s already dead. 
(Aloud to Edward.)
My lord, this day it’s you they hunt.

(Exit Queen. Enter 2nd servant.)

KING: What, dost thou come alone?

SERVANT: Yea, my good lord, for Gaveston is dead.

KING: Ah, traitors! Have they put my friend to death?

SERVANT: The earls seized him on his way; 
Strake off his head, and marched unto the camp.

KING: Oh, shall I speak, or shall I sigh and die!

SPENCER: My lord, refer your vengeance to the sword 
Upon these barons; hearten up your men; 
Let them not unreavenged murder your friends. 
Advance your standard, Edward, in the field, 
And march to fire them from their starting holes.

(The King kneels.)

KING: By earth, the common mother of us all, 
By heaven, and all the moving orbs thereof, 
By this right hand, and by my father’s sword, 
And all the honors longing to my crown, 
I will have heads, and lives for him, as many 
As I have manors, castles, towns, and towers. 
(Rises.)
Treacherous Warwick! Traitorous Mortimer! 
If I be England’s King, in lakes of gore 
Your headless trunks, your bodies will I trail,
That you may drink your fill, and quaff in blood,
You villains, that have slain my Gaveston.
And in this place of honor and of trust,
Spencer, sweet Spencer, I adopt thee here:
And merely of our love we do create thee
Earl of Gloucester, and Lord Chamberlain,
Despite of times, despite of enemies.

BALDOCK: My lord, here’s a messenger from the barons
Desires access unto your majesty.

KING: Admit him near.
(Enter Herald.)
Thou comst from Mortimer and his complices,
A ranker rout of rebels never was.
Well, say thy message.

HERALD: The barons up in arms by me salute
Your highness with long life and happiness;
And bid me say
That if without effusion of blood
You will this grief have ease and remedy,
That from your princely person you remove
This Spencer, as a putrifying branch,
That deads the royal vine.
Say they; and lovingly advise your grace,
To have old servitors in high esteem,
And shake off smooth dissembling flatterers:
This granted, they, their honors, and their lives,
And to your highness vowed and consecrate.

SPENCER: Ah, traitors! Will they still display their pride?

KING: Away, tarry no answer, but be gone.
Rebels, will they appoint their sovereign
His sports, his pleasures, and his company?
Yet, ere thou go, see how I do divorce
Spencer from me. (Embraces Spencer.) Now get thee to thy lords,
And tell them I will come to chastise them
For murdering Gaveston; hie thee, get thee gone.
Edward with fire and swords follows at thy heels.
(Exit herald.)
Soldiers, good hearts, defend your sovereign’s right,
For now, even now, we march to make them stoop.
I have a device. Our pikes will lie down in the quarry
Like corpses. Edward, King by right,
Will trap his guests. And when they come,  
Go for their throats!

(March to battle. Enter Mortimer, Lancaster, Pembroke, Warwick, and Kent on one side. 
Enter King, Spencer and Two Soldiers on the other.)

MORTIMER: Look, Lancaster, yonder is Edward  
Among his flatterers.

LANCASTER: And there let him be  
Till he pay dearly for their company.

WARWICK: And shall, or Warwick’s sword shall smite in vain.

KING: What, rebels, do you shrink and sound retreat?

MORTIMER: No, Edward, no, thy flatterers faint and fly.

LANCASTER: Thou’d best betimes forsake them, and their trains.  
For they’ll betray thee, traitors as they are.

SPENCER: Traitor on thy face, rebellious Lancaster!

PEMBROKE: Away, base upstart, bravest thou nobles thus?

SPENCER: A noble attempt, and honorable deed,  
Is it not, trow ye, to assemble aid,  
And levy arms against your lawful King?

KING: For which ere long their heads shall satisfy,  
T’appease the wrath of their offended King.

MORTIMER: Then, Edward, thou wilt fight it to the last,  
And rather bathe thy sword in subjects’ blood,  
Than banish that pernicious company.

WARWICK: Alarum! To the fight! St. George for England,  
And the barons’ right.

KING: Saint George for England, and King Edward’s right.

(Battle. Alarums. Exeunt and scatter. Enter King and Spencer.)

SPENCER: ‘Tis not amiss, my liege, for either part  
To breathe awhile; our men, with sweat and dust  
All choked well near, begin to faint for heat;
All this retire refresheth horse and man.

KING: Why do we sound retreat? Upon them, lords!
This day I shall pour vengeance with my sword
On those proud rebels that are up in arms,
And do confront and countermand their King.

SPENCER: I doubt it not, my lord, right will prevail.
Here come the rebels.

(Battle resumes. Enter King with barons and Kent as captives.)

KING: Now, traitors; now 'tis time
To be avenged on you for
The murder of my dearest friend,
To whom right well you knew our soul was knit,
Good Pierce of Gaveston, my sweet favorite.

KENT: Brother, in regard of thee, and of thy land,
Did they remove that flatterer from thy throne.

KING: So, sir, you have spoke; away, avoid our presence.
(Exeunt Kent with guards.)
Accursed wretches, was't in regard of us,
When we had sent our messenger to request
He might be spared to come to speak with us,
That thou, proud Warwick, headed him against law of arms?

WARWICK: Tyrant, I scorn thy threats and menaces.

LANCASTER: The worst is death, and better die
Than live in infamy under such a king.

KING: Off with both their heads. Away!
Our Majesty has plans
For this man who dislikes forgetfulness.
We desire to keep the memory
Of Killingworth Day alive in England.
You, Mortimer, are bleary-eyed with reckoning.
You are at home in books. Like worms. But books
Say nothing about Edward, who neither reads
Nor reckons, who knows nothing, but is one
With nature, and feeds on other food.
Go, take that haughty Mortimer to the Tower,
Bearing witness to the way
The son of Edward Longshanks has
Avenged his friend.
There see him safe bestowed; and for the rest,
Do speedy execution on them all.

MORTIMER: What, Mortimer? Can ragged stony walls
Immure thy virtue that aspires to heaven?
No, Edward, England’s scourge, it may not be;
Mortimer’s hope surmounts his fortune far.

KING: Begone! (Barons are led off by guards.)
And now we’ll wipe off this day’s sweat,
To cleanse this realm of the last vestiges of war.
For I will not set foot again in London,
Or sleep in any bed but a soldier’s cot,
Until I have engulfed that rabble,
As the sea engulfs a drop of rain.
Sound drums and trumpets! March with me, my friends.
Edward this day hath crowned him king anew.

SPENCER: Proclaim King Edward’s wars and victories!

(Exeunt omnes, taking table, bench and any debris from battle. Sound of axes chopping. Banners fall.)
ACT FOUR, Scene one

SIGN: PARIS—A ROOM. THE QUEEN GATHERS SUPPORTERS TO INVADE ENGLAND.

(Enter Queen, Prince Edward to a bench.)

QUEEN: Ah, boy, our friends do fail us all in France:
The lords are cruel, and the King unkind;
What shall we do?

PRINCE: Madam, return to England,
And please my father well, and then a fig
For all my uncle’s friendship here in France.
I warrant you, I’ll win his highness quickly;
‘A loves me better than a thousand Spencers.

QUEEN: Ah, boy, thou art deceived, at least in this,
To think that we can yet be tuned together;
No, no, we jar too far.

(Enter Sir John of Hainault and Two Servants.)

HAINAULT: Madam, what cheer?

QUEEN: Ah, good Sir John of Hainault,
Never so cheerless, nor so far distressed.

HAINAULT: I hear, sweet lady, of the King’s unkindness;
But droop not, madam;
Will your grace with me to Hainault,
And there stay time’s advantage with your son?
How say you, my lord, will you go with your friends?

PRINCE: So pleaseth the Queen, my mother, me it likes;
The King of England, nor the court of France,
Shall have me from my gracious mother’s side,
Till I be strong enough to break a staff;
And then have at the proudest Spencer’s head.

HAINAULT: Well said, my lord.

QUEEN: Oh, my sweet heart, how do I moan thy wrongs,
Yet triumph in the hope of thee, my joy.
Will we with thee to Hainault, so we will;
But who are these?
(Enter Kent and Mortimer.)

KENT: Madam, long may you live,
Much happier than your friends in England do.

QUEEN: Lord Kent and Lord Mortimer alive!
Welcome to France; the news was here, my lord,
That you were dead, or very near your death.

MORTIMER: Lady, the last was truest of the twain:
But Mortimer, reserved for better hap,
Hath shaken off the thralldom of the Tower,
And lives t’advance your standard, good my lord.

QUEEN: Gentle lords, friendless we are in France.

MORTIMER: Monsieur le Grand, a noble friend of yours,
Told us, at our arrival, all the news—
But, madam, right makes room
Where weapons want; and, though a many friends
Are dead, as Warwick and Lancaster,
Yet have we friends, assure your grace, in England
Would cast up caps, and clap their hands for joy,
To see us there appointed for our foes.

KENT: Would all were well, and Edward well reclaimed,
For England’s honor, peace, and quietness.

MORTIMER: But by the sword, my lord, it must be deserved;
The King will ne’er forsake his flatterers.

HAINAULT: My lords of England, sith the ungentle King
Of France refuseth to give aid or arms
To this distressed Queen his sister here,
Go you with her to Hainault;
We will find comfort, money, men and friends
Ere long,
How say, young prince, what think you?

PRINCE: I think King Edward will outrun us all.

QUEEN: Nay, son, not so; and you must not discourage
Your friends that are so forward in your aid.

MORTIMER: This noble gentleman, forward in arms,
Was born, I see, to be our anchor-hold.
Sir John of Hainault, be it thy renown,
That England’s Queen, and nobles in distress,
Have been by thee restored and comforted.

HAINAULT: Madam, along, and you, my lord, with me,
That England’s peers by Hainault’s welcome see.

(Exeunt. Bench is removed.)
ACT FOUR, Scene two

SIGN: WESTMINSTER—THE PALACE. THE KING PREPARES TO MEET THE REBEL INVASION.

(Enter a triumphal procession of King, Spencer, Baldock, One Guard, Two Servants, accompanied by fanfares. Bench is onstage.)

KING: Thus after many threats of wrathful war,
Triumpheth England’s Edward with his friends.
They say there is great execution
Done through the realm; you have the note, have you not?

BALDOCK: From the lieutenant of the Tower, my lord.

KING I pray, let us see it. What have we there?
Read it, Baldock—

BALDOCK: The Lord William Tuchet, the Lord William fitz William, the Lord Warren de Lisle, the Lord Henry Bradborne, and the Lord William Chenie—barons—with John Page, an esquire, were drawn and hanged at Pomfret. And then shortly after, Roger Lord Clifford, John Lord Mowbray, and Sir Gosein d’Eevill—barons—were drawn and hanged at York. At Bristol in like manner were executed Sir Henry de Willington and Sir Henry Montford, baronets. And at Gloucester, the Lord John Gifford and Sir William Elmebridge, knight. And at London, the Lord Henry Teies, baron. At Winchelsea, Sir Thomas Culpepper, knight. At Windsor, the Lord Francis de Aldham, baron. And at Canterbury, the Lord Bartholomew de Badelismere and the Lord Bartholomew de Ashbornham, barons. Also at Cardiff, in Wales, Sir William Fleming, knight, was executed. Divers were executed in their counties, as Sir Thomas Mandit and others.

KING: Why, so; they barked apace a month ago:
Now, on my life, they’ll neither bark nor bite.
Now, sirs, the news from France? Spencer, I trow
The Lords of France love England’s gold so well
As Isabel gets no aid from thence.
What now remains? Have you proclaimed, my lord,
Reward for them can bring in Mortimer?

SPENCER: My lord, we have; and if he be in England,
‘A will be had ere long, I doubt it not.

KING: If, dost thou say? Spencer, as true as death,
He is in England’s ground; our portmasters
Are not so careless of their King’s command.
(Enter Guard.)
How now, what news with thee? From whence come these?
SPENCER: “My duty to your Honor premised, etc. I have, according to instructions in that behalf, dealt with the King of France his lords, and effected, that the Queen, all discontented and discomforted, is gone: whither, if you ask, with Sir John of Hainault, brother to the Marquis, into Flanders. With them are gone Kent and the Lord Mortimer, having in their company divers of your nation, and others; and, as constant report goeth, they intend to give King Edward battle in England, sooner than he can look for them. Your honor’s in all service, Levune.”

KING: Ah, villains, hath that Mortimer escaped? With him is Kent gone associate? And will Sir John of Hainault lead the round? England shall welcome you and all your rout. Ah, nothing grieves me, but my little boy Is thus misled to countenance their ills. Come, friends, to Bristol, there to make us strong; And, winds, as equal be to bring them in, As you injurious were to bear them forth.

(Exeunt. Bench is removed.)
(Enter Queen, Prince Edward, Kent, Mortimer, Two Guards, Two Servants, and Sir John of Hainault.)

QUEEN: Now, lords, our loving friends and countrymen,  
Welcome to England all, with prosperous winds.  
Our kindest friends in Belgia have we left,  
To cope with friends at home; a heavy case  
When civil broils make kin and countrymen  
Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides  
With their own weapons gore. But what’s the help?  
Misgoverned kings are cause of all this wrack;  
And, Edward, thou art one among them all.  
But thou—

MORTIMER: Nay, madam, if you be a warrior,  
Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches.  
Lords, sith that we are by sufferance of heaven  
Arrived, and arm’d in this prince’s right,  
Here for our country’s cause swear we to him  
All homage, fealty, and forwardness;  
And for the open wrongs and injuries  
Edward hath done to us, his Queen and land,  
We come in arms to wreck it with the swords;  
That England’s Queen in peace may repossess  
Her dignities and honor: and withal  
We may remove these flatterers from the King,  
That havocs England’s wealth and treasury.

HAINAULT: Sound trumpets, my lord, and forward let us march.  
Edward will think we come to flatter him.

KENT: I would he never had been flattered more.

(Trumpets, drums, battle.)
ACT FOUR, Scene Four

SIGN: BRISTON CASTLE—A RAMPART. A BATTLE. THE KING’S FORCES ARE ROUTED.

(Enter King, Baldock and Spencer flying about the stage.)

SPENCER: Fly, fly, my lord, the Queen is overstrong; Shape we our course to Ireland, there to breathe.

KING: What, was I born to fly and run away, And leave that Mortimer conqueror behind? Give me my horse, and let’s r’enforce our troops: And in this bed of honor die with fame.

BALDOCK: Oh, no, my lord, this princely resolution Fits not the time; away, we are pursued. (Exeunt. Enter Kent with sword and target.)

KENT: This way he fled, but I am come too late. Edward, alas, my heart relents for thee. Proud traitor, Mortimer, why dost thou chase Thy lawful King, thy sovereign, with thy sword? Vile wretch, and why hast thou, of all unkind, Borne arms against thy brother and thy King? Edward, this Mortimer aims at thy life. Oh, fly him, then! But, Kent, calm this rage, Dissemble, or thou diest; for Mortimer And Isabel do kiss, while they conspire: And yet she bears a face of love forsooth. Fie on that love that hatcheth death and hate.

(Drums, trumpets. Enter Queen, Prince Edward, Mortimer, Hainault, and Two Guards. Hainault and Two Guards continue offstage, pursuing the King.)

QUEEN: Successful battles the God of kings gives To them that fight in right and fear his wrath. Since then successfully we have prevailed, Thanks be heaven’s great architect, and you.

KENT: Madam, without offense, if I may ask, How will you deal with Edward in his fall?

PRINCE: Tell me, good uncle, what Edward do you mean?

KENT: Nephew, your father: I dare not call him King.
MORTIMER: My Lord of Kent, what needs these questions?
‘Tis not in her controlment, nor in ours,
But as the realm and parliament shall please,
So shall your brother be disposed of.
(Aside to Queen.) I like not this relenting mood in Kent.
Madam, ‘tis good to look to him betimes.
We in meanwhile must take advice,
How Baldock, Spencer, and their complices,
May in their fall be followed to their end.

(Enter Hainault and Two Guards leading in the King, Spencer, Baldock, defeated.)

HAINAULT: Spencer and Baldock, by no other names,
I arrest you of high treason here.
Stand not on titles, but obey th’arrest;
‘Tis in the name of Isabel the Queen.
My lord, why droop you thus?

KING: O, day! The last of all my bliss on earth,
Center of all misfortune! O my stars!
Why do you lour unkindly on a king?
Comes Hainault, then, in Isabella’s name
To take my life, my company from me?
Here, man, rip up this panting breast of mine,
And take my heart in rescue of my friends!

HAINAULT: Away with them.

SPENCER: It may become thee yet
To let us take our farewell of his grace.

KING: Spencer, ah, sweet Spencer, thus then must we part.

SPENCER: We must, my lord, so will the angry heavens.

KING: Nay, so will hell and cruel Mortimer;
The gentle heavens have not to do in this.

BALDOCK: My lord, it is in vain to grieve or storm.
Here humbly of your grace we take our leaves;
Our lots are cast; I fear me, so is thine.

KING: In heaven we may, in earth never shall we meet:
And Hainault, say, what shall become of us?
HAINAULT: Your majesty must go to Killingworth.

KING: Must! ‘Tis somewhat hard, when kings must go.

HAINAULT: Here is a litter ready for your grace,  
That waits your pleasure, and the day grows old.

(Two servants roll coffin on stage.)

KING: A litter hast thou? Lay me in a hearse,  
And to the gates of hell convey me hence.  
Sweet Spencer, gentle Baldock, part we must.  
Farewell. Hainault, thou stayest for me,  
And go I must. Life, farewell, with my friends.

(Exeunt. Baldock and Spencer are executed.)
ACT FIVE, Scene One

SIGN: KENILWORTH CASTLE—A ROOM. THE KING ABDICATES.

(Enter King and Archbishop of Canterbury and two guards to a table.)

CANTERBURY: Be patient, good my lord, cease to lament,
Imagine Killingworth Castle were your court,
And that you lay for pleasure here a space,
Not of compulsion or necessity.

KING: Bishop, if gentle words might comfort me,
Thy speeches long ago had eased my sorrows;
For kind and loving hast thou always been.
The grief of private men are soon allayed,
But not of me, whose dauntless mind
The ambitious Mortimer would seek to curb,
And that unnatural Queen, false Isabel,
That thus hath pent and mewed me in a prison.
But when I call to mind I am a king,
Methinks I should revenge me of the wrongs
That Mortimer and Isabel have done.
My nobles rule, I bear the name of king;
I wear the crown, but am controlled by them,
By Mortimer, and my unconstant Queen,
Who spots my nuptial bed with infamy.

CANTERBURY: The Lord paints those he loves with grief and pallor.
Would it please Your Majesty to unburden your heart?

KING: I extorted taxes from the fishermen
Of Yarmouth, when they were starving.

CANTERBURY: What else weighs on your heart?

KING: All through the torrid August of a bygone year
I kept my queen in London. Out of caprice.

CANTERBURY: What else weighs on your heart?


CANTERBURY: What else weighs on your heart?

KING: I whipped my dog, Truly, till he bled. Out of pride.
CANTERBURY: What else weighs on your heart?

KING: Nothing.

CANTERBURY: Not unnatural vice? Or murder?

KING: Nothing. Oh, savage misery of man’s condition!
But tell me, must I now resign my crown,
To make usurping Mortimer a king?

CANTERBURY: Your grace mistakes; it is for England’s good,
And princely Edward’s right we crave the crown.

KING: No, ‘tis for Mortimer, not Edward’s head;
For he’s a lamb, encompassèd by wolves,
Which in a moment will abridge his life.
But if proud Mortimer do wear this crown,
Heavens turn it to a blaze of quenchless fire.

CANTERBURY: My lord, why waste you thus the time away?
They stay your answer: will you yield your crown?

KING: Ah, what the heavens appoint, I must obey!
Here, take my crown; the life of Edward too;
(Taking off the crown.)
Two kings in England cannot reign at once.
But stay awhile, let me be King till night,
That I may gaze upon this glittering crown;
So shall my eyes receive their last content,
My head, the latest honor due to it,
And jointly both yield p their wishèd right.
Inhuman creatures, nursed with tiger’s milk,
Why gape you for your sovereign’s overthrow?
See, monsters, see, I’ll wear my crown again!
(He puts on the crown.)
What, fear you not the fury of the King?
But, hapless Edward, thou art fondly led;
They seek to make a new-elected king;
Which fills my mind with strange despairing thoughts,
And in this torment comfort find I none,
But that I feel the crown upon my head,
And therefore let me wear it yet awhile.

CANTERBURY: My lord, the parliament must have present news,
And therefore say, will you resign or no?
(The King rageth.)

KING: I’ll not resign; not whilst I live.  
Traitors, be gone! And join you with Mortimer!  
Elect, conspire, install, do what you will,  
Their blood and yours shall seal these treacheries!  
Heaven and earth conspire to make me miserable.  
Here receive my crown;  
Receive it? No, these innocent hands of mine  
Shall not be guilty of so foul a crime.  
He of you all that most desires my blood,  
And will be called the murderer of a king,  
Take it. What, are you moved? Pity you me?  
Then send for unrelenting Mortimer,  
And Isabel, whose eyes, being turned to steel,  
Will sooner sparkle fire than shed a tear.  
Here, here! (Gives the crown.)  
Now, sweet God of heaven,  
Make me despise this transitory pomp.

CANTERBURY: By your leave then, I will recite  
The formula: I, Thomas,  
Archbishop of Canterbury, ask you  
Edward of England, second of that name,  
Son of Edward Longshanks: do you agree  
To abdicate the crown and to renounce  
All right and claim, thereto?

KING: Come, death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,  
Or if I live, let me forget myself. (Canterbury hands him the abdication proclamation to sign. Enter Hainault.)

HAINAULT: My lord—

KING: Call me not lord; away—out of my sight;  
Ah, pardon me: grief makes me lunatic.  
Let not that Mortimer protect my son;  
More safety is there in a tiger’s jaws,  
Than his embraces. (Canterbury nods in agreement. King signs the document.  
Canterbury snatches it away and starts to leave.)  
Bear this to the Queen,  
Wet with my tears, and dried again with sighs; (King gives a handkerchief to Canterbury.)  
If with the sight thereof she be not moved,  
Return it back and dip it in my blood.  
Commend me to my son, and bid him rule
Better than I. Yet how have I transgressed,
Unless it be with too much clemency?

CANTERBURY: And thus most humbly do we take our leave.

(Exit Canterbury and one guard.)

KING: Farewell; I know the next news that they bring
Will be my death; and welcome shall it be;
To wretched men death is felicity.

HAINAULT: My lord, the council of the Queen commands
That I fulfill my charge.

(The King take the paper.)

KING: By Mortimer, whose name is written here.
Well may I rent his name that rends my heart!
(Tears it.)
This poor revenge hath something eased my mind.
So may his limbs be torn, as is this paper.
Hear me, immortal Jove, and grant it too.

HAINAULT: Your grace must hence with me to Berkeley straight.

KING: Whither you will; all places are alike,
And every earth is fit for burial.

HAINAULT: Not yet, my lord; I’ll bear you on your way.

(Exeunt. Table is removed.)
ACT FIVE, Scene two

SIGN: WESTMINSTER—THE PALACE. KENT DENOUNCES THE REBELS. MORTIMER PLANS TO ASSASSINATE THE DEPOSED KING.

(Enter Mortimer and Queen Isabel on a bench and table.)

MORTIMER: Hoisting a small burden from the Primeval muck, I, though already my strength is Failing, cannot help but see the human weeds That cling to my load. More and more of them, Struggling upwards, I feel new weight At every step. And clutching the knees Of the last, another last. Human ropes. And manning the tackle, drawing all These human ropes over the pulleys, breathless: Myself.

QUEEN: Name the faces of your human weeds. My husband, Edward? My son, Edward?

MORTIMER: You.

QUEEN: I often used to fear that the arms with which I held a man erect might weaken, and fail me. And now that age has mingled the blood of my veins With weariness, nothing is left, but A crude machine of outstretched arms, an empty Mechanism of clutching. Mortimer, I am old and tired.

MORTIMER: Fair Isabel, now have we our desire; The proud corrupters of the light-brained King Have done their homage to the lofty gallows, And he himself lies in captivity. Be ruled by me, and we will rule the realm. Think therefore, madam, that imports us much To erect your son with all the speed we may, And that I be protector over him; For our behoof will bear the greater sway Whenas a king’s name shall be under writ.

QUEEN: Sweet Mortimer, the life of Isabel, Be thou persuaded that I love thee well, And therefore, so the prince my son be safe, Whom I esteem as dear as these mine eyes,
Conclude against his father what thou wilt,
And I myself will willingly subscribe.

MORTIMER: First would I hear news that he were deposed,
And then let me alone to handle him.
(Enter Canterbury and Two Servants.)
News from whence?

CANTERBURY: From Killingworth, my lord.

QUEEN: How fares my lord the King?

CANTERBURY: In health, madam, but full of pensiveness.

QUEEN: Alas, poor soul, would I could ease his grief.
(Canterbury shows the crown.)
Thanks, gentle Canterbury.

CANTERBURY: The king hath willingly resigned his crown.

QUEEN: Oh, happy news! Send for the prince, my son.

CANTERBURY: Lord Hainault came,
So that he now is gone from Killingworth;
And lives at Berkeley.

QUEEN: Hainault guards him close, does he not?

MORTIMER: Let me alone, here is the privy seal.
Who’s there? (To Canterbury.) Call hither Gurney and Matrevis.
(Exeunt Canterbury and Servants.)
Hainault shall be discharged, the King removed,
And none but we shall know where he lieth.

QUEEN: But, Mortimer, as long as he survivies,
What safety rests for us, or for my son?

MORTIMER: Speak, shall he presently be dispatched and die?

QUEEN: I would he were, so it were not by my means.

(Queen hides. Enter Matrevis and Gurney.)

MORTIMER: Enough.
Matrevis, write a letter presently
Unto the Lord Hainault from ourself
That he resign the King to thee and Gurney;  
And when ‘tis done, we will subscribe our name.

MATREVIS: It shall be done, my lord.

(Matrevis begins to write.)

MORTIMER: Gurney.

GURNEY: My lord.

MORTIMER: As thou intendest to rise by Mortimer,  
Who now makes Fortune’s wheel turn as he please,  
Seek all the means thou canst to make him droop,  
And neither give him kind word nor good look.

GURNEY: I warrant you, my lord.

MORTIMER: Let no man comfort him if he chance to weep,  
But amplify his grief with bitter words.

MATREVIS: Fear not, my lord, we’ll do as you command.

MORTIMER: So now away; post thitherwards amain.

(Mortimer signs letter. Queen reveals herself.)

QUEEN: Whither goes this letter? To my lord the King?  
Commend me humbly to his majesty,  
And tell him that I labor all in vain  
To ease his grief and work his liberty;  
And bear him this as witness of my love.

MATREVIS: I will, madam.

(Mortimer gestures for them to leave. Exeunt Matrevis and Gurney.)

MORTIMER: Finely dissembled. Do so still, sweet Queen.  
Here comes the young prince with the Earl of Kent.

(Enter Prince and Kent.)

QUEEN: Something he whispers in his childish ears.  
Use Kent friendly as if all were well.

MORTIMER: How fares my honorable Lord of Kent?
KENT: In health, sweet Mortimer: how fares your grace?

QUEEN: Well, if my lord your brother were enlarged.

KENT: I hear of late he hath deposed himself.

QUEEN: The more my grief.

MORTIMER: And mine.

KENT: (Aside.) Ah, they do dissemble.

QUEEN: Sweet son, come hither, I must talk with thee.

MORTIMER: Thou being his uncle, and the next of blood,
Do look to be Protector over the Prince.

KENT: Not I, my lord; who should protect the son,
But she that gave him life? I mean the Queen.

PRINCE: Mother, persuade me not to wear the crown;
Let him be King. I am too young to reign.

QUEEN: But be content, seeing it his highness’ pleasure.

PRINCE: Let me but see him first, and then I will.

KENT: Ay, do, sweet nephew.

QUEEN: Brother, you know it is impossible.

PRINCE: Why, is he dead?

QUEEN: No, God forbid.

KENT: I would those words proceeded from your heart.

MORTIMER: Inconstant Kent, dost thou favor him,
That wast a cause of his imprisonment?

KENT: The more cause have I now to make amends.

MORTIMER: I tell thee, ‘tis not meet that one so false
Should come about the person of a prince.
My lord, he hath betrayed the King his brother,
And therefore trust him not.
PRINCE: But he repents, and sorrows for it now.

QUEEN: Come, son, and go with the gentle lord and me.

PRINCE: With you I will, but not with Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Why, youngling, ‘sainst thou so of Mortimer? Then I will carry thee by force away. (Takes hold of the Prince.)

PRINCE: Help, Uncle Kent, Mortimer will wrong me.

QUEEN: Brother Kent, strive not; we are his friends; Isabel is nearer than the Earl of Kent.

KENT: Sister, Edward is my charge; redeem him.

QUEEN: Edward is my son, and I will keep him.

(Exeunt Queen and Prince Edward to one side. Kent follows them and speaks in aside.)

KENT: Mortimer shall know that he hath wronged me. Hence will I haste to Killingworth Castle, And rescue agèd Edward from his foes, To be revenged on Mortimer and thee. (Exit.)

MORTIMER: The King must die, or Mortimer goes down; The commons now begin to pity him; Yet he that is the cause of Edward’s death, Is sure to pay for it when his son is of age; And therefore will I do it cunningly. (Reveals letter and token.) This letter, written by a friend of ours, Contains his death, yet bids them save his life. “To kill Edward fear, not good it is,” Or, depending on the state of their innocence And the fullness or emptiness of their stomachs, “To kill Edward fear not, good it is.” I’ll send it as it is, without the comma: “To kill Edward fear not good it is.” Matrevis and Gurney may bear the blame, And we be quit that caused it to be done. Within this room is locked the messenger That shall convey it, and perform the rest: And by a secret token that he bears, Shall he be murdered when the deed is done.
Lightborn, come forth!

(Enter Lightborn.)

Art thou as resolute as thou was?

LIGHTBORN: What else, my lord? And far more resolute.

MORTIMERO: And has thou cast how to accomplish it?

LIGHTBORN: Ay, ay, and none shall know which way he died.

MORTIMERO: But at his looks, Lightborn, thou wilt relent.

LIGHTBORN: Relent! Ha, ha! I use much to relent.

MORTIMERO: Well, do it bravely, and be secret.

LIGHTBORN: You shall not need to give instructions;
‘Tis not the first time I have killed a man.
I have a braver way than any before.

MORTIMERO: What’s that?

LIGHTBORN: Nay, you shall pardon me; none shall know my tricks.

MORTIMERO: I care not how it is, so it be not spied.
Deliver this to Gurney and Matrevis.
(Gives letter.)
At every ten miles’ end thou hast a horse.
Take this;
(Gives money.)
away, and never see me more.

LIGHTBORN: No?

MORTIMERO: No,
Unless thou bring me news of Edward’s death.

LIGHTBORN: That will I quickly do. Farewell, my lord.

(Exit.)

MORTIMERO: The prince I rule, the Queen do I command,
And with a lowly congé to the ground,
The proudest lords salute me as I pass;
I seal, I conceal, I do what I will.
Feared am I more than loved;--let me be feared,
And when I frown, make all the court look pale.
They thrust upon me the protectorship,
And sue to me for that that I desire.
I am Protector now.
Now is all sure: the Queen and Mortimer
Shall rule the realm, the King; and none rule us.
Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance;
And what I list command who dare control?
And that this be the coronation-day,
It pleaseth me, and Isabel the Queen.

(Exit. Bench and table are removed.)
ACT FIVE, Scene three

SIGN: WESTMINSTER—THE CATHEDRAL. EDWARD III IS CROWNED KING OF ENGLAND. MORTIMER EXECUTES KENT.

(Trumpets within. Enter Prince, Archbishop of Canterbury, Queen, Mortimer, and Two Servants. All face upstage before the table. Canterbury places crown on Prince’s head. He is now Edward III.)

CANTERBURY: Long live King Edward, by the grace of God, King of England and Lord of Ireland. If any Christian, Heathen, Turk, or Jew, Dare but affirm that Edward’s not true King, And will avouch his saying with the sword, Let him come forth.

MORTIMER: None comes, sound trumpets.

(Trumpet fanfare. All turn front.)

EDWARD III: Canterbury, Here’s to thee. (Edward III hands a pouch of money to Canterbury.)

QUEEN: Lord Mortimer, now take him to your charge.

(Enter Hainault and Two Guards with Kent prisoner.)

MORTIMER: What traitor have we there with blades and bills?

HAINAULT: The Earl of Kent.

EDWARD III: What hath he done?

HAINAULT: ‘A would have taken the King away perforce At Killingworth.

MORTIMER: Did you attempt his rescue, Kent? Speak.

KENT: Mortimer, I did; he is our King, And thou compellest this prince to wear the crown.

MORTIMER: Strike off his head! He shall have martial law.

KENT: Strike off my head! Base traitor, I defy thee.
EDWARD III: My lord, he is my uncle, and shall live.

MORTIMER: My lord, he is your enemy, and shall die.

KENT: Stay, villains!

EDWARD III: Sweet mother, if I cannot pardon him, 
Entreat my lord protector for his life.

QUEEN: Son, be content; I dare not speak a word.

EDWARD III: Nor I, and yet methinks I should command. 
My lord, if you will let my uncle live, 
I will requite it when I come to age.

MORTIMER: ‘Tis for your highness’ good, and for the realm’s. 
How often shall I bid you bear him hence?

KENT: Art thou King? Must I die at thy command?

MORTIMER: At our command. Once more away with him.

(Guards hale Kent away, and carry him to be beheaded.)

EDWARD III: What safety may I look for at his hands, 
If that my uncle shall be murdered thus?

QUEEN: Fear not, sweet boy; I’ll guard thee from thy foes; 
Had Kent lived he would have sought thy death. 
Come, son, we’ll ride a-hunting in the park.

EDWARD III: And shall my uncle Kent ride with us?

QUEEN: He is a traitor; think not on him; come.

(All proceed to observe Kent’s execution, which is being set up, using the bench. The table is removed. The execution occurs during the next scene. Exeunt.)
ACT FIVE: Scene four

KENILWORTH CASTLE—A ROOM. THE ASSASSINATION PLOT RUNS ITS COURSE.

(Enter Matrevis and Gurney to a bench. King is on table to the side. Execution of Kent is mimed in background.)

MATREVIS: Gurney, I wonder the King dies not,
Being in a vault up to the knees in water,
To which the channels of the castle run,
From whence a damp continually ariseth,
That were enough to poison any man,
Much more a king brought up so tenderly.

GURNEY: And so do I, Matrevis: yesternight
I opened but the door to throw him meat,
And I was almost stifled with the savor.

MATREVIS: Let us assail his mind another while.

GURNEY: Send for him out thence, and I will anger him.

MATREVIS: But say, who’s this?

(Enter Lightborn.)

LIGHTBORN: My Lord Protector greets you.

(Gives letter.)

GURNEY: What’s here?
“To kill Edward fear not good it is.”

MATREVIS: “To kill Edward fear not.” That’s what it says.

GURNEY: Give the token.

LIGHTBORN: Know you this token? I must have the King.

(Gives token.)

MATREVIS: Ay, stay awhile, thou shalt have answer straight.
(Aside.) This villain’s sent to take away the King.

GURNEY: I thought as much.
MATREVIS: And when the murder’s done,
See how he must be handled for his labor.
(Aloud.) Let him have the King.
Do as you are commanded by my lord.

LIGHTBORN: I know what I must do.
See that in the next room I have a fire,
And get me a spit, and let it be red-hot.

MATREVIS: Very well.

GURNEY: Need you anything besides?


GURNEY: That’s all?

LIGHTBORN: Ay, ay; so, when I call you, bring it in.
(Exeunt Gurney and Matrevis. Kent’s execution upstage is complete by now.)
So, here’s a place indeed, with all my heart.

KING: Who’s there? What light is that? Wherefore comes thou?

LIGHTBORN: To comfort you, and bring you joyful news.

KING: Villain, I know thou comst to murder me.

LIGHTBORN: To murder you, my most gracious lord!
Far is it from my heart to do you harm.
The Queen sent me to see how you were used,
For she relents at this your misery.

KING: List awhile to me and then thy heart
Will melt, ere I have done my tale.
This dungeon where they keep me is the sink
Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.

LIGHTBORN: Oh, villains!

KING: And there in mire and puddle have I stood
This ten days’ space; and, lest that I should sleep,
One play continually on a drum.
My mind’s distempered, and my body’s numbed,
And whether I have limbs or no I know not.
LIGHTBORN: Oh, speak no more, my lord; this breaks my heart. 
Lie on this bed, and rest yourself awhile.

KING  I see my tragedy written in thy brows.

LIGHTBORN: What means your highness to mistrust me thus?

KING: What means thou to dissemble with me thus?

LIGHTBORN: These hands were never stained with innocent blood, 
Nor shall they now be tainted with a king’s.

KING: Forgive my thought for having such a thought. 
One jewel have I left; receive thou this. 
(Gives jewel.)
Still fear I, and I know not what’s the cause. 
Let this gift change thy mind, and save thy soul. 
Know that I am a king; Oh, at that name 
I feel a hell of grief! Where is my crown? 
Gone, gone, and do I remain alive?

LIGHTBORN: You’re overwatched, my lord; lie down and rest.

KING: For not these ten days have these eyes’ lids closed. 
Now as I speak they fall, and yet with fear 
Open again. Oh, wherefore sits thou here?

LIGHTBORN: If you mistrust me, I’ll be gone, my lord.

KING: No, no, for if thou meanst to murder me, 
Thou wilt return again, and therefore stay.

LIGHTBORN: He sleeps.

KING: Oh, let me not die, yet stay, oh, stay a while!

LIGHTBORN: How now, my lord?

KING: Something still buzzeth in mine ears, 
And tells me if I sleep I never wake; 
This fear is that which makes me tremble thus; 
And therefore tell me, wherefore art thou come?

LIGHTBORN: To rid thee of thy life. Matrevis come!

(Enter Matrevis and Gurney.)
KING: I am too weak and feeble to resist: 
Assist me, sweet God, and receive my soul!

(They press him with the mattress.)

LIGHTBORN: Run for the table.

(Exit Matrevis.)

KING: Oh, spare me, or dispatch me in a trice.

(Matrevis enters with table.)

LIGHTBORN: So lay the table down, and stamp on it, 
But not too hard, lest that you bruise his body.

(Matrevis and Gurney press table down on top of mattress. Lightborn skewers Edward with poker. Edward dies.)

MATREVIS: I fear me that this cry will raise the town, 
And therefore let us take a horse and away.

LIGHTBORN: Tell me, sirs, was it not bravely done?

GURNEY: Excellent well; take this for thy reward. 
(Then Gurney stabs Lightborn, who dies.)

Come, let us cast the body in the moat, 
And bear the King’s to Mortimer our lord: 
Away!

(Exeunt with bodies. Benches are removed. Table is removed.)
ACT FIVE, Scene five

SIGN: WESTMINSTER—THE PALACE. EDWARD III EXECUTES MORTIMER AND IMPRISONS THE QUEEN, HIS MOTHER, IN THE TOWER.

(Enter Mortimer, reading on one side and Queen on the other.)

QUEEN: Ah, Mortimer, the King my son hath news
His father’s dead, and we have murdered him!

MORTIMER: What if we have? The King is yet a child.

QUEEN: Ay, ay, but he tears his hair, and wrings his hands,
And vows to be revenged upon us both.
Into the council-chamber he is gone,
To crave the aid and succor of his peers.
Ay, me, see where he comes, and they with him;
Now, Mortimer, begins our tragedy.

(Enter Edward III, Hainault, Two Servants, Two Guards with hearse.)

EDWARD III: Villain!—

MORTIMER: How now, my lord?

EDWARD III: My father’s murdered through thy treachery;
And thou shalt die, and on his mournful hearse
Thy hateful and accursèd head shall lie,
To witness to the world that by thy means
His kingly body was too soon interred.

QUEEN: Weep not, sweet son.

EDWARD III: Forbid not me to weep, he was my father;
But you, I fear, conspired with Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Who is the man dare say I murdered him?

EDWARD III: Traitor, in me my loving father speaks,
And plainly saith, ‘twas thou that murdrest him.

MORTIMER: But hath your grace no other proof than this?

EDWARD III: Yes, if this be the hand of Mortimer.

(Showing letter.)
MORTIMER: (Aside.) False Gurney hath betrayed me and himself.

QUEEN: I feared as much; murder cannot be hid.

MORTIMER: (Aloud.) ‘Tis my hand; what gather you by this?

EDWARD III: That thither thou didst send a murderer.


EDWARD III: Ah, Mortimer, thou knowest that he is slain; And so shalt thou be too. Why stays he here? But bring his head back presently to me.

QUEEN: For my sake, sweet son, pity Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Madam, entreat not, I will rather die, Than sue for life unto a paltry boy. There’s a wheel, my boy, and the strumpet Fortune Runs it. It takes you upward. Upward, And upward. You hold tight, upward. Then comes a point, the highest. There you see that ‘Tis not a ladder; it carries you back down, Because, as we all know, a wheel is round. Why should I grieve at my declining fall? Now tell me, when this happens to a man, Does he fall with the wheel, or does he let go? The question’s amusing. Farewell, fair Queen; weep not for Mortimer.

EDWARD III: What! Suffer you the traitor to delay?

(Mortimer is taken away by Hainault and Two Guards.)

QUEEN: As thou receivedst thy life from me, Spill not the blood of gentle Mortimer!

EDWARD III: This argues that you spilt my father’s blood, Else would you not entreat for Mortimer.

QUEEN: I spill his blood? No.

EDWARD III: Ay, madam, you; for so the rumor runs.

QUEEN: That rumor is untrue; for loving thee
Is this report raised on poor Isabel.

(Mortimer is executed.)

EDWARD III: Mother, you are suspected for his death,
And therefore we commit you to the Tower
Till further trial may be made thereof;
If you be guilty, though I be your son,
Think not to find me slack or pitiful.

QUEEN: Nay, to my death, for too long have I lived,
Whenas my son thinks to abridge my days.

EDWARD III: Away with her, her words enforce these tears,
And I shall pity her if she speak again.

QUEEN: Shall I not mourn for my belovèd lord,
And with the rest accompany him to his grave?

(Servants seize Queen. Enter Hainault with head of Mortimer. The head is a basketball.
Throughout the rest of the scene, Edward III plays with it and then draws the others into playing with it.)

HAINAULT: My lord, here is the head of Mortimer.

(Queen screams as she is led off by Servants.)

EDWARD III: Accursèd head,
Could I have ruled thee then, as I do now,
Thou hadst not hatched this monstrous treachery!
Help me to mourn, my lords.
Sweet father, here unto thy murdered ghost
I offer up this wicked traitor’s head;
And let these tears, distilling from mine eyes,
Be witness of my grief and innocency.

(Fadeout on characters playing keep-away with the head.)

SIGN: A NEW REIGN BEGINS. LONG LIVE THE KING.