

20. Richard III Character question annotated, Act IV scene ii

Q. In these extracts, how does Richard show us that his ruthless behaviour is due to his personal vulnerability?

CATESBY (*Aside to another*)

The King is angry. See, **he gnaws his lip.**

RICHARD (*Aside*)

I will converse with iron-witted fools
And unrespective boys – **none are for me**
That look into me with **considerate eyes!**
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.

(*To the PAGE*)

Boy!

PAGE (*Coming close to the throne*) My lord?

RICHARD Know'st thou not any whom **corrupting gold**
Will tempt unto a close exploit of death?

PAGE I know a discontented gentleman
Whose humble means match not his haughty spirit.
Gold were as good as twenty orators,
And will, no doubt, **tempt him to anything.**

RICHARD What is his name?

PAGE His name, my lord, is Tyrrel.

RICHARD **I partly know the man.** Go call him hither, boy.

Exit PAGE.

(*Aside*)

The **deep-revolving witty** Buckingham
No more shall be the neighbour to my counsels.
Hath he so long held out with me, untired,
And **stops he now for breath? Well, be it so!**

Enter STANLEY, Earl of Derby, and kneels before RICHARD.

How now, Lord Stanley! What's the news?

STANLEY Know, my loving lord,
The Marquis Dorset, as I hear, is fled
To Richmond, in the parts where he abides.

STANLEY *risks and stands back (as RICHARD calls CATESBY to him).*

RICHARD Come hither, Catesby. **Rumour it abroad**
That Anne, my wife, is very grievous sick.
I will take order for her keeping close.

Actions suggest
unease and
irrational decision-
making.

Richard is
becoming
isolated.

Richard is
abusing his
power and
aligning himself
with known
criminals that
he can buy
rather than
political allies
that he can't.

Richard feels a
victim of his
own practice
yet still
manages to
make a timely
pun.

Richard is
behaving
irrationally,
panicking and
reacting without
the careful
plotting he set up
in previous
scenes.

Inquire me out some mean poor gentleman,
Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter
The boy is foolish, and I fear not him.
Look how thou dream'st! I say again, give out
That Anne, my queen, is sick and like to die.
About it! For it stands me much upon
To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me.

55

He is aggressive and likely to inspire fear in others by his temper and reactionary orders.

Exit CATESBY.

(Aside) I must be married to my brother's daughter,
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass.
Murder her brothers, and then marry her!
Uncertain way of gain! But I am in
So far in blood that sin will pluck on sin.
Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye!

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65

The aside reveals that his mood is similar in private now, he is caught in a cycle of events he cannot stop.

Re-enter the PAGE, with Sir James TYRREL.

Is thy name Tyrrel?

TYRREL James Tyrrel, and your most obedient subject.

RICHARD Art thou, indeed?

TYRREL Prove me, my gracious lord.

RICHARD Dar'st thou resolve to kill a friend of mine?

TYRREL Please you –
But I had rather kill two enemies.

70

RICHARD Why, then thou hast it. Two deep enemies,
Foes to my rest, and my sweet sleep's disturbers,
Are they that I would have thee deal upon.
Tyrrel, I mean those bastards in the Tower.

75

TYRREL Let me have open means to come to them,
And soon I'll rid you from the fear of them.

RICHARD Thou sing'st sweet music. Hark, come hither, Tyrrel.
Go by this token. Rise, and lend thine ear.

(He whispers instructions.)

There is no more but so. Say it is done,
And I will love thee and prefer thee for it.

80

Richard is behaving as a conventional dictator, paying thugs to commit murders in order to keep him in power, at least temporarily. He is no longer theatrical and entertaining for the audience.

TYRREL I will dispatch it straight.

Exit.