

Gaveston

(Reads a Letter)“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 favourite of a king!

Sweet prince, I come; these, these thy amorous lines

Might have enforced me to have swum from France,

And, like Leander, gasped upon the sand,

So thou would'st smile, and take me in thine arms.

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 harbours 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; –

King Edward

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,
With these thy superstitious taper-lights,
Wherewith thy antichristian churches blaze,
I'll fire thy crazèd buildings, and enforce
The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground!
With slaughtered priests may Tiber's channel swell,
And banks raised higher with their sepulchres!
As for the peers, that back the clergy thus,
If I be king, not one of them shall live.

Young 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.
But were he here, detested as he is,
How easily might some base slave be suborned
To greet his lordship with a poniard,
And none so much as blame the murtherer,
But rather praise him for that brave attempt,
And in the chronicle enroll his name
For purging of the realm of such a plague!

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: –

What needst thou, love, thus to excuse thyself?

I know thou couldst not come and visit me:

[*Reads*] “*I will not long be from thee, though I die.*”

This argues the entire love of my lord;

[*Reads*] “*When I forsake thee, death seize on my heart.*”

But rest thee here where Gaveston shall sleep. [*Puts the letter into 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.

Queen Isabella

O miserable and distressed queen!
Would, when I left sweet France and was embarked,
That charming Circes, walking on the waves,
Had changed my shape, or at the marriage-day
The cup of Hymen had been full of poison,
Or with those arms that twined about my neck
I had been stifled, and not lived to see
The king my lord thus to abandon me!
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 cursèd 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 for ever miserable.

King Edward

[*Kneeling*] 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 honours 'longing to my crown,
I will have heads, and lives for him, as many
As I have manors, castles, towns, and towers! – [*Rises.*]
Traucherous 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,
And stain my royal standard with the same,
That so my bloody colours may suggest
Remembrance of revenge immortally
On your accursèd traitorous progeny,
You villains that have slain my Gaveston! –
And in this place of honour and of trust,
Spenser, sweet Spenser, 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.

Queen Isabella

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 force to force is knit, and sword and glaive
In civil broils make kin and countrymen
Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides
With their own weapons gored! But what's the help?
Misgoverned kings are cause of all this wrack; –
And, Edward, thou art one among them all,
Whose looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoil,
And made the channels overflow with blood.
Of thine own people patron shouldst thou be.

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?
Vild wretch! – and why hast thou, of all unkind,
Borne arms against thy brother and thy king? –
Rain showers of vengeance on my cursèd head,
Thou God, to whom in justice it belongs
To punish this unnatural revolt! –
Edward, this Mortimer aims at thy life!
O fly him, then! – But, Edmund, calm this rage,
Dissemble, or thou diest; for Mortimer
And Isabel do kiss while they conspire:
Fie on that love that hatcheth death and hate!