

DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Alan V. Kennedy
1966



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DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

By

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A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

1966

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

HENRY VIII, KING OF ENGLAND

CATHERINE OF ARAGON, QUEEN OF ENGLAND

ANN BOLEYN, LADY IN WAITING TO THE QUEEN

CARDINAL WOLSEY, PAPAL LEGATE TO ENGLAND
CHANCELLOR OF THE REALM

JOHN SKELTON, POET LAUREATE OF ENGLAND

LORENZO CARDINAL COMPEGGIO, PERSONAL ENVOY OF THE POPE
GUARDS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this play is to show the personal and private considerations that motivated Henry VIII which in turn affected the destiny of a nation and to show that Henry was educated, somewhat of a scholar, and certainly interested in the fine arts rather than an uncouth barbarian murdering his wives at his own whim or fancy. It also attempts to show Henry as a pathetic figure with tragic qualities forced by his position in history and life to make decisions contrary to his nature and that political intrigues pressured him into acts of violence necessary to consolidate and perpetuate the Tudor line on the throne of England. It attempts to show Henry in rather intimate surroundings, stripped of the trappings of public display, for it is in this environment that actual decisions are made and the full brunt of the consequences felt.

The title, Defender of the Faith, represents the great irony in the life of this monarch. He was given this title by the Pope for the pamphlets he wrote against Luther and for sending actual troops to combat the threat of Protestantism.¹ As fate would have it, the King who hated Protestants, broke with the church and became the

¹E. R. Adair, "Henry VIII," Collier's Encyclopedia, ed. William T. Couch, IX (1956), 646.

spiritual leader of one of our Protestant denominations. However, he at no time ever considered himself anything less than a staunch Catholic.²

The actual idea for this view of Henry VIII came from an English legend that records that Henry, upon signing the order for execution of one of his wives, had tears streaming down his face and was physically forced from countermanding the order. It is with this image in mind that I have ended my play.

Historically the events in the play are accurate with the following exceptions.

Catherine of Aragon was not killed by Henry, merely divorced. She was his first wife; his brother's widow, and also the aunt of Emperor Charles V.³ Charles did intercede with Pope Clement VII and blocked Henry's attempt to get the marriage annulled.⁴ It is probable that it would have been annulled had not Charles interceded on the behalf of Catherine. There was precedence in the marriage of Louis of France and Margaret of Scotland.⁵ The Pope was disposed to favor this request and did send Lorenzo Cardinal Compeggio to England to hear the suit⁶. Compeggio, however, was recalled by the Pope after Charles made his demands.⁶

²Ibid.

³Edith Simon and The Editors of Time-Life Books, The Reformation (New York: Time, Inc., 1966), p. 80.

⁴Ibid., p. 81.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Catherine did not try to murder Henry after she found out that Henry had an affair with her Lady in Waiting, Ann Boleyn. This fact was included to heighten the dramatic effect and give Wolsey more of a case to have her beheaded. Ann, however, was pregnant before Henry married her and she did want to be Queen.⁷ It is presumed that the major reason Henry married Ann Boleyn was precisely because she was pregnant and this was a possibility for a male heir.

All other events in the play actually happened to Henry. Cardinal Wolsey was an ambitious Chancellor of the Realm, who hoped to be Pope one day, and virtually ran England with Henry's consent. At the height of his power few would oppose him with the exception of Henry's tutor and friend, John Skelton, poet-laureate of England.⁸ Wolsey was determined to get Skelton for his blasphemous poetry and Skelton had to flee to Westminster and spent the last six years of his life there.⁹ Henry often liked to play one against the other for his own amusement.

The poetry is Skelton's and the episode about the child in church is historically correct.¹⁰

Thus, I have attempted to show a new view or uncommon view of Henry VIII, as a man pressured by his time and

⁷Ibid., p. 80.

⁸Phillip Henderson (ed.), The Complete Poems of John Skelton, Laureate (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1931), p. xii.

⁹Ibid., p. xiii.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xi.

position to commit acts that made him into a despotic and ruthless monarch. Had he not been King, perhaps he would have been one of the great poets of the period like his friend and tutor, John Skelton.

ACT I

ACT I

(Skelton is in Priest habit.)

(As the curtain opens Henry and John Skelton are on stage. Henry is reading from Skelton's manuscript. Skelton is seated, one foot over the edge of a table, drinking from a mug of ale and eating grapes, one at a time, from a bowl on the table, listening to Henry read. Henry moves about the stage as he reads.)

Henry

(Reading) . . . Haec vates ille, De quo loquantur mille . . .

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . (He translates) . . . John

Skelton, that poet of whom a thousand speak . . . Ha . . .

Ha . . . Ha . . .

Skelton

I see you remembered your Latin.

Henry

(Ignoring this) . . Your not very humble.

Skelton

Was I ever?

Henry

One would think you would at least spare us allusions to yourself.

Skelton

The ballad singers like it . . . they sing of me in alehouses.

Henry

It's a good place for you.

Skelton

Ohhhhhhh . . . moralistic . . . you used to like them.

Henry

How could I help it . . . you dragged me there for real
life tutoring.

Skelton

(Acting) . . Oh, the life of a poet . . . to be abused by the
King he so loyally served.

Henry

Hmmmmmmmm . . . and you never let me forget it.

Skelton

I who have been made laureate by the most renowned Univer-
sities in the land . . .

Henry

. . . With my help.

Skelton

They would have done it any how . . .

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . (reading)

"Too hasty of sentence
Too scarce of your expense
Too large in negligence
Too slack in recompense
Too light in intelligence."

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Cardinal Wolsey will have your
head for this.

Skelton

He's tried before.

Henry

You've gone too far . . . He's been waiting for just such
an excuse. Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . ever since you wrote
Colin Clout and said his justice is as crooked as a ram's horns.

Skelton

Well, it is . . . turn the page . . . I especially like this part . . .

Henry

(Turns the page and reads.)

"He will drink us so dry
And suck us so nigh,
That men shall scanty
Have penny or halfpenny
God save his noble grace
And grant him a place
Endless to dwell
With the devil of hell."

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . I can't wait to see his face . . .
Ha . . . Ha . . .

Skelton

Well, at least it's good to see you laughing again . . .
You've been somber as a stone these last few weeks.

Henry

How would you know . . ? You're supposed to be at your parish in Norfolk.

Skelton

Oh . . and that . . a fine protector you have been . . I,
who have just about weaned you since the age of

Henry

Nine.

Skelton

Yes . . . and what is my reward? You let that monkish
Cardinal banish me to an obscure parish where 20 ignorant
people have the nerve to complain of my irregularities to that
bloody Bishop Bix.

Henry

It's not my fault you took the cloth. You weren't satisfied with being a scholar . . you had to be a priest-scholar.

Skelton

So?

Henry

I make it a rule never to meddle in church affairs.

Skelton

Ha!

Henry

I have Wolsey for that.

Skelton

How about the pamphlets you wrote against Luther?

Henry

I make an exception where Protestants are concerned.

Skelton

You're always making exceptions.

Henry

(Firm statement of fact.) I'm a King.

Skelton

(Feeling he may have overstepped himself) Yes my leige.

(Changing the subject on purpose) Why have you been so down in the mouth of late? Your groom, old Stephen, tells me you've been jumping around like a dog with the fleas.

Henry

Humpff . . . oh . . . State Affairs (trailing off)
Affairs of State . . . (Something is obviously troubling
Henry) (Long pause) . . (Forcing merriment) Let's forget my

Henry

problems . . . (He grabs two mugs of ale from a tray on a
near table) . . . You always did like a good mug of ale . . .
Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . been bloody boring around here with
you up in Norfolk.

Skelton

Bloody boring in Norfolk. I knew you'd miss me.

Henry

I miss watching you fight with Wolsey. It's the only
bright spot on my dismal days. (They drink.) Ha . . .
Ha What else have you written? Anymore poems for
the Cardinal's benefit?

Skelton

One at a time is good enough for him. That's all he can
digest without having a stroke. How about you?

Henry

No time.

Skelton

Too bad . . . you had a token of talent . . . if you weren't
the King you could be a scholar.

Henry

If I was a scholar . . . I'd take your place . . . then what
would you do?

Skelton

I'd try to be the King?

Henry

Ha. . . Ha Ha

Skelton

Why not . . . I hear it's the vogue . .

Henry

What have you heard?

Skelton

My . . . hit a tender spot

Henry

(Jumping up) . . What have you heard?

Skelton

My liege . . I was only making merry . . . we've often joked
about no heir . . .

Henry

Well . . it's no joke . . .

Skelton

It shall never cross my lips again. .

Henry

I'm in no mood for you . . (Getting ready to dismiss him)

Skelton

That bad?

Henry

Francis 1st of France has broken his vow of betrothal to
my sister and married that bitch Isabella of Portugal.

Skelton

Hmmmm . . .

Henry

Listen to this note . . . "Dear Henry, Please excuse this
impertinence, but really, Isabella of Portugal is worth

Henry

much more than Mary of England . . and I just thought of what you would do in my place." signed Francis 1st of France.

Skelton

(Smiling) . . . at least he has a sense of humor . . . and he knows you.

Henry

It won't be so funny when English troops ravage his shores.

Skelton

(Shocked) You're not going to invade?

Henry

Can't afford it.

Skelton

(Relieved) oh

Henry

Besides, I already have troops in France fighting the Huegenots . . . Humppff . . . I ought to turn them against Francis.

Skelton

Why don't you?

Henry

Not enough.

Skelton

Oh. Well, your sister Mary is nice enough . . . you can find her another . . .

Henry

I could care less about Mary. Now what am I going to do for an heir? The knights have been satisfied even though I don't have a male heir for they thought my sister could at least hatch something worth while Now what's going to happen?

Skelton

Oh, something will turn up . . you've heard these rumors for years and ignored them. Why are you so upset now?

Henry

As usual you fail to grasp the gravity of the situation.

Skelton

Don't tell me you're getting into politics! Not the King who liked to drink and hunt and would keep the Star Chamber waiting for days to finish a game of chess.

Henry

I don't need your sarcasm.

Skelton

And I used to tell you to take more interest . . . I liked you better the way you were before . . .

Henry

It's getting worse and worse . . . more problems every day . . If I could only hunt I could rid my mind . . . but the blasted weather I often dream of living over an alehouse filledwith Elinor Rummings . . .

Skelton

(Laughing boisterously). . . Ha . . Ha. . Ha . . She was a

Skelton

figment of my imagination. . .

Henry

Ahhhh. . . but what a woman. . . and I could read . . . and
dance . . .

Skelton

Alehouse whores are rotten dancers. . .

Henry

Stop spoiling the image. . . and I could discuss at length
. . . . whatever I wanted to discuss. . .

Skelton

You're a King. . .that doesn't appear as too great a request. . .

Henry

Again. . . you fail . . .

Skelton

(Chiming in) . . to discover the gravity of the situation. .
I still don't know why you're so upset. . .Far worse events
have not moved you before. . .

Henry

Well . . . they're moving me now.

Skelton

What is really bothering you? You can't fool the old tutor.

Henry

Oh. . . . (Long pause) . . . if you were a King? . . .
perhaps it doesn't make any difference. . .

Skelton

What . . .?

Henry

Do you believe in curses?

Skelton

Curses. . . ! Ha . . Ha. . Ha . . I hope not . . . If the good Cardinals more powerful than I suppose . . I'm in trouble . . He's cursed me more times than I can count. . .

Henry

If you'd stop talking for your own amusement . . . Bahhh . . There's no one I can talk to in this whole realm. . .

Skelton

I'm sorry..I've been putting this face on for so long..I don't even know when I'm serious or should be serious. . What is troubling you?

(The door opens and Cardinal Wolsey is announced)

Guard

His eminence, Cardinal Wolsey.

Wolsey

(He does not notice Skelton at first.) My lord. . . . Excuse the interruption, but . . . (He sees Skelton but thinks it only a priest) . . oh, I see you're talking to a priest.

Skelton

(Jumping up) . . . Glory be . . it's the King's chaplain. I won't take your job love . . . just giving his majesty the 47 graces.

Wolsey

I see it's our famous priest who's more fit for the stage
than pew or pulpit.

Skelton

I'd rather be on the stage than that pulpit you exiled me
to in Norfolk . . . hardly fitting for a man of my rank.

Wolsey

It will teach you humility.

Skelton

And reinforce my vow of poverty . . . I haven't eaten a
decent meal since I've been away.

Henry

(Enjoying this) Have you read Master Skelton's latest
manuscript? (He tosses it to Wolsey.)

Skelton

(Attempting to retrieve the manuscript) I think this
is hardly the time

Wolsey

I read major poets . . . not minor poets

Skelton

I didn't know you could read . . . my manuscript, please.

Wolsey

No . . . (Keeping the manuscript) . . it will give me some
entertainment at my leisure . . .

Henry

It is most funny

Skelton

It's not quite that funny . . .

Henry

(Rising to the opportunity) . . . Oh but it is . . . you've never been bashful before . . . in fact . . . He just told me Cardinal Wolsey that he considers it his greatest work . . .

Skelton

In all due regard to you Sire . . . you are stretching a point. . .

Henry

In fact I believe he wrote it for your amusement . . .

(To Wolsey)

Wolsey

Really. . .

Skelton

Not really. . .

Wolsey

I hope I find it most amusing. . .

Skelton

Oh . . . you'll be amused. . . .

Wolsey

I'm sure. .

Skelton

I'll take my leave my Lord . . . with your permission. . .
my parishoners need my guidance. . . .

Wolsey

Or you . . . theirs . . .

Henry

Denied! . . . I'm especially fond of people today . . . and
since the weather won't permit me to hunt . . . we'll talk...

Skelton

Yes, my Lord.

Wolsey

My Lord . . it might be better if I had a word with you . .
alone

Henry

John Skelton knows better than to repeat what he hears here.

Wolsey

(Quite agitated at Skelton staying) . . . But my Lord . . .

(Henry motions to continue)

Yes my lord . . . It is just that I'm amazed you will
discuss affairs of state in the presence of this "wandering,"
so-called priest.

Skelton

(Reciting)

"It is a wondrous case
That the Kings grace
is toward him so minded
And so far blinded
That he cannot perceive
How he doth him deceive"

(Wolsey turns threateningly)

Henry

Quiet you jackanape . . . Ignore him for the present. What
news is so urgent?

Wolsey

As my reports have indicated there is great unrest in the realm now all my fears have been realized.

Henry

What . . ?

Wolsey

The Scots are rioting and three of my tax collectors have been killed . . I've sent the Earl of Sussex to put the rebellion down but it will take him at least two weeks to get there . .

Henry

Why wasn't I informed?

Wolsey

My Lord, I've just learned myself . . and I'm afraid it could spread . . . the taxes are very unpopular . . .

Henry

How is a King supposed to get money . . . I can't fight a war and send troops against the Protestants without money. . .

Wolsey

My Lord . . . I told you the treasury was low when you sent out the last expedition . . . but you insisted. And now that your sister, the princess, is not to be wed . . . there is talk . . .

Henry

What talk ?

Wolsey

Several knights, no doubt following the Earl of Northumberland's example, have been talking about creating an heir to the throne to relieve strife and possible bloodshed in the kingdom. . .

Henry

How dare they . .

Wolsey

I am taking steps, my Lord . . . the heresy will be rooted out.

Skelton

Like the Earl of Northumberland . . that was the fastest beheading in history . . which prompted me to write my eulogy . . . (He recites)

"Upon the dolorous death
and much lamentable chance
of the most honorable
Earl of Northumberland."

Wolsey

(Extremely angry now) . . . This is the individual who is really creating unrest in your realm . . . the ballad singers scoff at your taxes, sing of his praises, and openly laugh at your officers. He encourages them with his little ditties and hundreds are heard singing his heresies from ale house to ale house . . . He makes your subjects laugh at the crown . . . Norfolk is too good for him . . . Ireland would be a better place and he can compose in the fields for the poppies to sing . . .

Skelton

At least I'm not an overweening busybody, taking on more than I can accomplish, bungling everything, wasting the country's money on futile schemes abroad and maintaining myself at home in wanton luxury Why come ye not to court . . .? Which court? Wolsey's court at Hampton Court Palace or the King's court?

Wolsey

You You

Skelton

My! the Cardinal's face is as red as his cap . .

Henry

Quiet! Carry on your fued some other place . . I haven't time for you two today What knights? What people? I want names.

Wolsey

Yes, my Lord.

Henry

And I want them quickly. Too long have I left the reins of my crown to others . . I leave everyone alone and now . . . look at my reward . . . rebellion and dissention. Before I'm done they will know who Henry Tudor is in England.
(Looking at them both with obvious meaning.) I'll behead anyone, friend or foe, who would but dare to aspire before his star ascends in the sky. Do I make myself clear?

Wolsey

Your enemies are in the dungeon my lord, your friends are here.

Henry

My enemies! Not an hour goes by that they don't spring up out of some foreign rock or peasant dung . . . or some long, lost bastard son doesn't come back to claim his due. If I had as many bastard sons as are running around in France and England claiming their birthright, I would have died of fatigue 10 years ago . . . nay 20 years ago . . . and 20 years ago I hardly knew what it was for (Silence.) . . . I will make my own heir . . . a Tudor to follow me . . . even if my wife's scrawny daughter has to ascend the throne.

Skelton

That would be a bit sticky . . . after Queen Matilda's 19 years of civil strife our populace would love the prospect of another Queen.

Wolsey

My Lord, the popular impression is that a woman will never rule England again.

Henry

Popular impression? I will decide the next ruler of England.

Wolsey

Yes, my Lord.

Henry

(To Skelton) . . And you wondered if I had written any poetry lately . . . you have the life John Skelton . . . even you . . . my good Cardinal . . . You're both worthy adversaries in the game of chess . . . (Both smile) . . . Tomorrow . . . tomorrow . . . we must have a game of chess . . .

Henry

today I'll devote to the State . . . but tomorrow . . .

Guard

(Announces) Queen Catherine and Mistress Anne -

(Catherine and Ann enter. Skelton and Wolsey both partially bow.)

Catherine

Hello Cardinal and you Master Skelton . . I hope I'm not interrupting anything . . .

Henry

Well, you are . . . what do you want?

Catherine

What bit you today? I see you've both put my husband in a lovely mood . . . Say hello to the King Ann . . . but at a distance. (In a stage whisper) . . . He's in a bad mood.

Ann

Good afternoon, your grace. (Bowing) (Smile on her face)

Henry

What put you in such a good mood today?

Catherine

You, my Lord . . . You.

(Henry can't help smiling at this last remark despite himself.)

Henry

I see you still have your foolish tongue.

Catherine

Oh, yes . . my lord. And I've been saving it all day to talk to you.

Henry

I noticed it was overactive.

Wolsey

(Embarrassed.) My lord, we'll take our leave.

Catherine

Oh my good Cardinal . . . (Mocking) and Master Skelton . . .
don't leave on my account. I'm only the Queen . . . I'm
sure you could find some . . . other games . . . to take
my husband's mind off the kingdom he is losing.

Henry

I'm not losing any kingdom . . . and I asked you to hold
your tongue in the presence of others.

Catherine

I was only . . .

Henry

Only . . . only . . . if you don't put a girdle on your
tongue you'll lose your head.

Wolsey

My lord.

Henry

Yes. Take your leave (He waves them away.)

Wolsey

(Bows and exits) My lord.

Skelton

(Bows) My lord.

Henry

(To Skelton) Don't go too far. We'll talk further today.

Skelton

Yes, my lord. (Exits)

Catherine

I wonder where your great tutor is going now . . in which
alehouse will you find him Henry?

Henry

He happens to be more than a tutor. He's my friend.

Catherine

Some friend. Fine company for a King. He set the Catholic
religion back 100 years when he became a priest . . .
and then you had the nerve to let him say . . . Mass for
your departed brother, Arthur.

Henry

Arthur didn't mind. He was dead.

Catherine

Everyone else minded.

Henry

Meaning you.

Catherine

Well if you weren't always talking or being with that ill-
living wretch you could take more interest in what is
happening to your kingdom.

(Ann, sensing the coming storm, quietly but obviously to
the audience, slips out of the room)

Henry

Nothing is heppening to my kingdom.

Catherine

It is. And now Mary isn't going to be married. What are you going to do about that?

Henry

Nothing.

Catherine

You're always doing nothing. An insult to the royal family and you're doing nothing . . . just like you've always done.

Henry

You fail to understand

Catherine

I understand. I know you. I've had to push you even to make the match for Mary in the first place.

Henry

I can't be bothered with match-making and silly quarrels. I have higher duties.

Catherine

Do you do them?

Henry

Yes.

Catherine

No. You'd rather hunt . . . or dance . . . or eat!

Henry

. . . Or read . . . or drink . . . or travel . . . but no. I've got to listen to you. Why are you resting? What are you doing now? You're not going to Windsor again? What is so

Henry

interesting in Windsor? Why don't you put a book up and I can sign in and out as I please . . . then you'll know where I am.

Catherine

It might be a good idea. Have you heard petitions in a month . . . two months? Have you attended the Star Chamber? Have you attended to any duties?

Henry

I've been busy.

Catherine

Busy . . .? Busy hunting in Ayleshire . . . that only took two weeks. Then you had a three day chess game with Master Skelton. Then you went to Bath for three weeks for your health.

Henry

You fail to understand that I have Cardinal Wolsey to advise me and take care of my affairs when I'm . . . away.

Catherine

He's doing somewhat of a bad job. You've had riots over taxes and even the Scots refuse you as their King.

Henry

It's being taken care of.

Catherine

How?

Henry

It may surprise you to know that I know exactly what is going on in my kingdom every minute. Because . . . because I don't get excited . . . or sound the trumpet at each little pitfall . . . you and your . . . friends assume I take no interest. Well, I do. There are different ways to rule. I shall do as I please.

Catherine

You don't rule. Cardinal Wolsey rules as much as you.

Henry

True. But the power . . . the power of life and death rests here. And don't you ever forget it. At any moment, I have the power to change . . . And if I'm not pleased . . . (He snaps his fingers) . . . I change

Catherine

Humpfffffffff

Henry

Like the wind . . . Catherine . . . (Snaps his fingers) . . . change . . . (Turns the other direction and snaps his fingers) . . . Change

Catherine

Well you had better change soon or there'll be nothing left to change . . .

Henry

Everything is fine.

Catherine

It's not fine. Your kingdom is all bobbled up . . . Its time you started preparing your daughter and taking charge yourself or she'll have nothing left to rule.

Henry

You needn't worry about that. She'll never be Queen in England.

Catherine

She is the rightful heir.

Henry

She's a princess. What more do you want? We'll find her a good husband and she can be Queen some place else.

Catherine

She will be Queen after you're gone and if you weren't such a fool you would accept her and support her.

Henry

How can I support her? England will never accept a Queen on her throne. Two months later and she'd have lost the whole thing.

Catherine

You only have to name her

Henry

And what happens when I'm dead? Who's going to let her keep the throne?

Catherine

She will be Queen then. No one will dare

Henry

Ha! Don't you realize she would be dethroned within months of my death. Don't you realize that would end the Tudor line . . . my line on the throne.

Catherine

You exaggerate.

Henry

Well we're not going to find out. A woman . . . to wage wars . . . consolidate my territories . . . a sniveling, crawling, bawling, emotional wench to lead this ship of state . . . ? Never! I'd rather cut off my codpiece and be a capon.

Catherine

Then a capon you'll be for no one will set on this throne but a full-blooded princess with your blood in her veins.

Henry

My blood? In her veins? That piece of slender chalk? It's probably my brother, Arthur's before he died.

Catherine

You would dare . . . She's your daughter.

Henry

Some daughter. Why couldn't you bear me a son. All my trouble stems from the fact that you're incapable of producing a male heir.

Catherine

I could . . . if you had not ceased to lie with me.

Henry

I would lie with thee lady if I thought there was some use.
I feel not like exerting my energy for a pittance instead
of a pound.

Catherine

A pittance?

Henry

A pittance! Three miscarriages, one-still born, and one
piece of chalk is a pittance. With that I quit.

Catherine

It's obvious to everyone that you have quit . . . or are
not able . . .

Henry

Not able? Ha! It's obvious that I have a simpleton for
a wife who can't produce when she's got the blood of Kings
in her veins

Catherine

It takes two . . .

Henry

Unfortunately. It's too bad I need you.

Catherine

Well, you won't do any better yourself.

Henry

Or any worse.

Catherine

Well she's first born and first born she shall remain.

Henry

The only born from your womb.

Catherine

Nevertheless, the nobles will never allow you to put anyone else on the throne in her place. . .

Henry

We shall see.

Catherine

It's too bad Arthur died . . . He'd have

Henry

Arthur! Ha! That's a score I have to settle
I blame him most incarnate for his untimely death. Had he not died I would not have been plagued with his weeping widow which is the source of all my problems.

Catherine

I am no problem.

Henry

Ha!

Catherine

Well, I wouldn't be if you'd spend some time at home with me instead of (Mocking) Master Skelton and your good Cardinal . . . England ought to annoint all three and you could divide the duties up evenly . . . you could be in charge of social affairs. . . .

Henry

Mouth almighty, chops everlasting . . . your mouth is as big as all outdoors. . One day I'll have it sewn up to spare your life from your foolish tongue.

Catherine

My life will do fine, but by my wits, not my tongue.

Henry

Your wits? They left you when your feeble brain relinquished its reign to your tongue.

Catherine

No reign has been relinquished, save to you Henry . . . and that was a rainy day in English history.

Henry

Leave me . . . I sit in bewilderment and disgust that you can't discuss matters larger than your own chamber . . . I mourn for my lost wife.

Catherine

Lost to you but alive for England . . . I go to prepare our future Queen for her tedious chores following your chaos.

Henry

The only chaos is in your mind thinking she will ever follow me.

Catherine

That she will.

Henry

Prepare her for the grave . . . we'll crown her posthumously.

Catherine

Your own daughter?

Henry

Henry VIII will have no daughters, only sons.

Catherine

Well there won't be any sons from me so you had better get to know your only daughter.

Henry

There are times when an individual must be subordinate to the state. This is one of those times.

Catherine

If God had wanted you to have a son he'd have given you a son . . . (Henry is caught by surprise and is speechless for a moment.)

Henry

(Slowly and deliberately) God has nothing to do with it.

Catherine

It's Providence.

Henry

It's . . . nothing! I'd have a son if I hadn't married you.

Catherine

Well . . . you did, Henry.

Henry

Get out!

Catherine

It was a wonderful wedding on a beautiful day.

Henry

Bah!

Catherine

The sun was shining . . .

Henry

Out!

Catherine

Birds were in the sky . . .

Henry

(Threatening) Madam

Catherine

I take my leave . . . (She exaggerates and bows very low)

I wouldn't dream of interrupting the King. Bye.

(Exits) (Quickly)

Henry

Providence Humpffffffffff What does she know about Providence? Arthur isprobably smiling in his grave right now . . . Well it wasn't Providence that he died . . it was consumption Sounds like something Skelton would do . . . marry a bitch then leave her to someone else to care for . . . (He hollers) . . . Guard!

(Guard enters)

Guard

Yes, my lord.

Henry

Find Master Skelton. Have him sent here.

Guard

Yes, my lord. (Exits)

Henry

(Thinking out loud) And the heavens winced at this disrespect for propriety . . . (Silence. Picks up Skelton's book (another) (from nearby bookcase) (Reads) "Say Skelton is your Adonis; Say Skelton was your Homer . . .

(He laughs) (Then continues reading)

Henry

(Reading)

"Christ keep King Henry the Eighth
From treachery and deceit
And grant him grace to know
The falcon from the crow
the wolf from the lamb."

ahhh . . . grant him grace hmmmmmm . . . at least I
have one loyal subject in my realm . . . grace . . the grace
of Leviticus . . . the curse of Leviticus . . Hmmmmmm . . .
(Throws the book on the table) . . . Oh, Skelton . . . you
are a rogue

Guard

His eminence . . Cardinal Wolsey . . (Wolsey enters)

Wolsey

My lord . . . I've just come from the audience hall...

Henry

ahhh . . . my good Cardinal . . . I've been thinking about
Leviticus . .

Wolsey

My Lord, I told you to put that out of your mind . . .
As we have discussed . . there is no cause for alarm.

Henry

I wonder . . .

Wolsey

Did not the Pope himself exercise special dispensation.

Henry

Yes . . . we've been through it . . What news . .

Wolsey

I could get another letter from the Pope . . .

Henry

No . . . what news.?

Wolsey

A wee bit of trouble . . . the Earl of Kent is gathering a number of strong knights to his position that you need to pick an heir now. . . . They've heard of your sisters near-betrothal and there are rumblings. . .

Henry

Bah . . .

Wolsey

If you recall my lord . . . you did arrange the marriage only to satisfy their demands then . . . now there is to be no marriage. . . they are no longer satisfied.

Henry

I'll satisfy them . . . I'll satisfy their heads on the chopping block. .

Wolsey

I ordinarily take care of such matters . . . but the Earl of Kent is your cousin . . . and the Queen mother's favorite. . .

Henry

He'll be a dead favorite. .

Wolsey

That still won't satisfy succession. . . You must act and quickly my lord . . . the knights are balking at every new decree . . . I've gone as far as I can go . . .

Henry

Oh . . how I would love to get even with every one of them
that would dare question my authority . . . they never question-
ed my fathers why do they balk and question me . . .

Wolsey

If you would agree my lord . . I could have him arrested
and thrown in the tower . . .

Henry

No . . . that would only fan the flames of discontent . .
He is popular . . isn't he?

Wolsey

Yes my lord . . that's why I hesitated . . .

Henry

More popular than me. . .

Wolsey

Oh no my lord . . the populace love you . . . your athletic
prowess . . and wit is still talked about in every hamlet
and town . . .

Henry

But how about the knights?

Wolsey

They get rambunctious . . . but they can be put in their place.
I have the means if you would give the word . .

Henry

Ha . . Ha . . (Henry starts to laugh boisterously) . .
Wouldn't that be a joke . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . .
they want a successor . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . .

Wolsey

My lord . .

Henry

They want a successor . . . I've got a successor . . .

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . .

Wolsey

My Lord? Mary?

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Wolsey, I have decided . . . I
want to take from obscurity my only illegitimate son . . .
I'll make him my heir . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . and I'll give
him precedence over Mary . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . .
Ohhhhh, I can hear Catherine now . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha .

Wolsey

But my Lord, you cannot . . the knights would never allow
such an act . . A low-born ascend the throne? Never!
No one would ever accept him in place of Mary.

Henry

I'll allow him. I'll create him Duke of Richmond and Somerset.
That will make him high-born . . . then I'll leave it to him
to carry on the Tudor line.

Wolsey

The Tudor line from a . . . a . . . Oh, my Lord. It would
never be allowed. Why, there would be anarchy . . you
could even lose your crown . . . Such conditions would not
be acceptable.

Henry

They wanted an heir. I've given them an heir. Ha . . .
Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . I want to tell the Earl of Kent
myself.

Wolsey

You're not serious . . my lord?

Henry

Why not?

Wolsey

Why a six year old illegitimate son is hardly better
than a nine year old legitimate daughter. We must find
another solution. The air is too brisk in England to let
Mary or your other heir come to the throne. Indeed, under
such circumstances the Tudor line would end with Henry.

Henry

It still would serve them right for their affrontery.

Wolsey

It's much too dangerous . . .

Henry

Ha . . Ha . . Ha . . What a classic joke.

Wolsey

(Looks disapprovingly at Henry) . . If only your sister was
to be wed . . I'm sure they won't swallow that line again.
Is there no chance? I mean with the Queen . . . my Lord.

Henry

None. I've been to so many child burials I feel like a
personal emissary of the Plague.

Wolsey

You have had more than your share of misfortune.

Henry

Odd . . . Why me . . . Why do you think I have been cursed
in this manner . . .

Wolsey

I don't know my lord.

Henry

Why not Francis of France . . . his wife keeps popping them
out all over the place.

Wolsey

The Lord works in strange ways.

Henry

He certainly does . . I should have known Catherine would
be sterile . . . she never had any children by Arthur.

Wolsey

You do have a fine daughter my lord.

Henry

Same thing! . . . Now look at the trouble she has me in ...
I still say there's more to this than is apparent.

Wolsey

My lord?

Henry

You were the one who said I could marry my brother's
widow.

Wolsey

The Pope said you could marry your brother's widow.

Henry

At your instigation.

Wolsey

You needed the alliance with Spain to blunt France.

Henry

Did it help? Now Spain has an alliance with France.

Wolsey

That could not be foreseen.

Henry

And now I have no heir.

Wolsey

If worse comes to worse . . . you do have Mary.

Henry

How could it get any worse . . . the curse says its an unclean thing . . .

Wolsey

You don't really believe in curses.

Henry

You're a holy man . . what does the curse of Leviticus say?

Guard

Master Skelton, Poet Laureate of England.

(Skelton enters)

Skelton

And special poet to the King and his Cardinal . . .

(He bows low, exaggerating) . . . and in a particularly good humor under the protection of his majesty, the King.

(The last was said for Wolsey's benefit.)

Henry

Master Skelton . . . Are you familiar with the curse of Leviticus?

Skelton

(With great pomp) . . . Leviticus XX, 21 . . . "and if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless." (He makes the sign of the Cross) . . . Dominus Vobiscum.

Henry

Childless . . . you see . . . childless . . . that's why I don't have an heir . . .

Wolsey

You're not childless . . . you have Mary . .

Henry

I might as well be childless . . .

Wolsey

We have discussed this before . . . did not the Pope issue a bull exempting you from the curse?

Henry

I'm being punished by God, not the Pope.

Wolsey

No one is punishing you.

Skelton

Surely the Archbishop of York, Chancellor of the realm, and papal legate to England, did not encourage the King of England to defy natural law . . .

Wolsey

Would you kindly keep your remarks to yourself or as a representative of the Pope . . . I'll . . .

Henry

As a representative of the Pope and as the one who got me into this mess . . . get me out.

Wolsey

My lord, I . . .

Henry

Get me out . . .

Wolsey

How?

Henry

I want a divorce . . .

Wolsey

The church doesn't recognize divorce.

Henry

There is precedence . . why could the divorce not be obtained from Rome as it has for Louis XII of France and Mary of Scotland . . . Answer me that . .

Wolsey

Well . . . that was annulled . . .

Henry

Then get mine annulled . . .

Wolsey

My lord . . you have been married 9 years . . . It would be difficult.

Henry

But not impossible.

Wolsey

Not impossible . . .? No. I imagine there are ways.
But annulment of a 9 year marriage . . . I just don't
know . .

Henry

Find out . .

Wolsey

My lord . . you're not serious with this.

Henry

Why not . . . ?

Wolsey

Why . . . Catherine . . the Queen . . what is to become of
her?

Henry

She's a comely enough lass . . I'll arrange a good marriage
for her . . . after all . . an ex-queen should be in demand.

Wolsey

My lord!

Henry

Queen Catherine will not have a son. I need a son.
A son? I need an heir. Ergo, I need another Queen.
. . . . and I doubt its validity. (Quietly, almost under
his breath)

Wolsey

But you did receive special dispensation . . . All proper
under canon law.

(Henry looks at Skelton for approval or rejection)

Skelton

It is proper . . . under canon law, my Lord.

Henry

But not under natural law. It is a base and unclean thing to marry your brother's widow . . . and you shall be childless . . . I should never have married her in the first place. .and since the Pope went against all that's holy . . . He will have to unmarry me to satisfy the holy scriptures . . . I am living proof that the Pope could not override the curse and it is his duty to set it right.

Wolsey

I don't know . . . I'm not sure the Pope will be estactic over your reasoning.

Skelton

We have a new Pope now . . .

Wolsey

True . .

Skelton

But Popes don't usually like to admit other Pope's mistakes.

Wolsey

I don't know.

Henry

The mistake is obvious. He has no choice but to set it right by public annulment of the marriage.

Wolsey

Well, at least, he, himself, didn't marry you . .

Skelton

Surely, Pope Clement would not refuse King Henry of England, who has championed the Papal cause both in arms and written pamphlet against Luther . . one who has earned the title of Defender of the Faith, bestowed by his Holiness, the Pope, himself.

Henry

Of course. How can he possibly refuse after all I've done for him. If it wasn't for me, the Protestants would be overrunning England and France at this very moment. . . . He owes me . . . at the very least . . . this one favor . . does he not?

Wolsey

Indeed, my lord . . . it would seem . . .

Henry

And I have troops chasing down the Huegenots in France at this very moment . . . I'm sure he would be unhappy if I recalled my troops . . don't you think Cardinal Wolsey?

Wolsey

Yes, my lord.

Henry

Under the circumstances . . and since he did it for Louis . . I cannot see any reason why he would not want to ease the conscience of a loyal subject who wants to repent and make his peace with God.

Wolsey

A most admirable decision my Lord . . . A great King . .

Wolsey

prostrating himself publicly before the Holy See most certainly would receive grace . . especially in these troubled times . . with Luther and all . .

Henry

I'm sure his Holiness could see certain . . . propaganda advantages

Wolsey

A firm and public resolve to strengthen our great church . . And promises of renewed, vigorous efforts on behalf of his Holiness . . may be looked upon with some interest.

Henry

You are a most learned and skilled man, Cardinal Wolsey . . . I'm sure this delicate mission could be handled with . . . aplomb . . . and perhaps . . . strengthen your own position in Rome . .

Wolsey

I see my duty my Lord . . . and Wanting to serve my King and the dictates of my conscience . . .

Henry

You may grant . . . boons . . you think necessary to help convince the Pontiff . . . and strengthen our great religion.

Wolsey

Of course, my Lord . .

Henry

So be it . . . with the help of God and the Pope . . . the marriage of Henry Tudor, King of England, and Catherine

Henry

of Aragon will be declared null and void under canon law . . .

I, Henry, King of England, resolve . . . what Pope Julius

II has done, Pope Clement VII can undo!

END OF ACT I (CURTAIN)

ACT II

ACT II

(It is three months later. Henry and Wolsey are on stage alone. Wolsey has just returned from Rome and for the present he is so enraged at John Skelton that he neglects to tell Henry the news from Rome.)

Wolsey

(Pacing) . . I'm gone three months . . . and what does he do . . . it's embarrassing to the church .. to God .. and an affront to religion . . . he has desecrated the cloth . . . and I am Papal Legat to England . . what does it look like . . . he's made Catholicism the laughing stock of England . . . I won't stand for it . . . (He is waving Skelton's manuscript around as he talks). And I suppose you have read this . . another piece of trash from Skelton's pen . . . He has gone too far and he has committed a capital offense . . . and for it he should be hanged . . I can't keep religious and civil order with him bandying around the countryside. . . laughing at the cloth he wears and at your laws . . .

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . Ha . . (Enjoying this) . . . What has he done this time?

Wolsey

This time? . . Every time! I have a letter from Bishop Nix that he sent to me all the way to Rome . . . to the

Wolsey

cradle of the Holy See his desecration came . .

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . What is it?

Wolsey

(He puts the manuscript down) . . . Listen to this . . .
Just listen to what this foul barbarian hath done
(He reads from a letter) . . . He's married . . a priest
married . . and living with her in the house provided
by his congregation at Norfolk. . . .

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . Ha . . . married?

Wolsey

Not only is he married which is a capital offense . .
but listen . . . listen . . . to what he has done . . .
naturally his congregation complained to Bishop Nix . . .
upon hearing this he berates the good people in their own
church for complaining of him . . . then . . . then . . .
he calls his wife forward . . . in church he calls her
forward . . . and holding a naked baby up before his parish
he says, (Reading) ". . . How say you neighbors all . . .
is not this child as fair as the best of yours? It hath
nose, eyes, hands, and feet, as well as any of yours; it is
not like a pig nor a calf, nor like no fowl or monstrous
beast. If I had brought forth this child without arms or
legs, or that it were deformed, I would never have blamed
you to complain to the Bishop about me . . but to complain

Wolsey

without a cause" . . . (Hardly believing) . . . he says
there's no cause . . . (Reading) . . you be and have been
knaves to complain of me without a cause reasonable."

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . He didn't . . ?

Wolsey

He did . . . every word of it is from Bishop Nix and when
the Bishop called him for it . . . he said it was no
different from me and read to him from his own poem . .
(He takes manuscript from table) . . . (reading) . . .
"like the red cap . . . I spareth neither maid nor wife."
. . . about me he said that . . .

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . I didn't know Cardinal.

Wolsey

(Speaking very fast) He has gone too far . . . and now he
has committed a capital offense and he is going to pay if I
am to remain in office and as Papal Legat to England I
cannot allow this to pass no matter . . .

Henry

Ha . . . ha . . . ha . . . easy . . . easy . . . Ha . . Ha . .
tell me the news from Rome.

Wolsey

. . . calling me . . . a Cardinal . . . that I'm . . . and
he's married . . and with a child. . . .

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . now . . . what of Rome?

Wolsey

What of his parishioners . . . what of religion . . . I am going to excommunicate him and . .

Henry

Fine Ha . . Ha . . but what of Rome?

Wolsey

You must rid your realm of him . . . he is a detriment to society . . . to Catholicism . . .

Henry

Do whatever you like . . . now what of Rome?

Wolsey

(At hearing this Wolsey stops his tirade. He has been waiting for just such an opportunity to get Skelton).

Wolsey

Yes, my lord . . . I will deal with the matter as you have instructed . . . forgive my anxiety . .

Henry

Yes . . yes . . . what did the Pope say?

Wolsey

The Pope? . . . (He smiles) . . . (Slowly, very satisfied with himself) . . . My Lord, after I explained matters to the Pope . . . he indeed seems inclined to honor your request for an annulment.

Henry

He did?

Wolsey

Did I not tell you my Lord that he would not refuse the
King of England.

Henry

(Relieved) . . Did ever a King have such a worthy counselor ..

Ha . . . Ha . . . We must have a drink. . .

(He looks to the table for mugs, then thinks)

But how . . . when . . . ?

Wolsey

(Beaming) . . . I accompanied the Pope's emissary all
the way from Rome.

Henry

Here . . he's here . . .

Wolsey

Yes, my lord.

Henry

Why didn't someone tell me?

Wolsey

I wanted to give you the news personally, my lord.

Henry

Oh . . . ah, ha. . . Cardinal Wolsey . . you are indeed . . .
a fine, fine . . nay worthy counselor.

Wolsey

I try to please my lord.

Henry

And please your lord, you do . . . all the way from Rome . . .
all the way from Rome . . (Elated) . . the Pope sent a man
all the way from Rome.

Wolsey

Yes, my lord.

Henry

(Dancing with Glee . . . oh . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha
all the way from Rome . . . What's he called?

Wolsey

Lorenzo Cardinal Compeggio, my lord.

Henry

(Repeating) . . . Lorenzo Cardinal Compeggio . . . a
cardinal oh . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . why didn't
the Pope let you sever the matrimonial bonds? . . . you're
a Cardinal.

Wolsey

It appears much more . . . sanctified . . . if the Pope's
own emissary performed the act. A most wise Pope, my lord.

Henry

A most wise Pope indeed, Cardinal Wolsey.

Wolsey

And all for the small promise of a few troops committed to
fight Luther in Germany.

Henry

What?

Wolsey

A small token of our good faith.

Henry

Oh . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . a small token . . . How
small?

Wolsey

I'll work out the details, my lord.

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . fine . . . What kidn of man is this Compeggio? Have you talked with him? How are things in Rome?

Wolsey

I've talked with him . . . and . . .

Henry

And?

Wolsey

He seems nice enough.

Henry

(Not looking for that answer). What are his orders?

Wolsey

I'll let him tell you my lord. He will be here presently.

Henry

He is here then . . . (Nervous) . . . fine . . . fine . . . presently . . . how long is presently?

Wolsey

I could ask him to repair here now my Lord.

Henry

No. . . . I should rather wait on the Cardinal's leisure. I have always thought it best not to irritate those from whom you curry favor. Has his every need been attended to?

Wolsey

Yes, my lord.

Henry

Of course it has. Ha . . . Ha . . . Why did I ask? Has there ever been anything for which you did not attend?

(Wolsey bows politely)

Guard

My lord, her Majesty the Queen. (Catherine enters followed by Ann)

Henry

Oh . . . what bad timing.

Catherine

Good day, Cardinal Wolsey . . . (To Henry) my Lord.

Ann

(Bowing) My lord.

Catherine

Cardinal Wolsey, was your recent trip to Rome a success?

Wolsey

(Flustered) . . My lady, . . it was pleasant . . .

Catherine

And his Holiness, the Pope, was pleasant.

Wolsey

Yes, my lady . . . everyone was most pleasant.

Catherine

Did you go for your health?

Wolsey

My lady?

Catherine

. . . to Rome . . . did you travel to Rome for your health?

Wolsey

Not exactly . . . er . . . religious matters, my lady.

Catherine

Oh . . . religious matters . . .

Wolsey

Yes.

Catherine

Ann, the Cardinal went to Rome for religious matters.

Ann

(Smiling) . . . yes, my lady.

Catherine

Well, I'm glad you went to Rome for religious matters.

Henry . . how on earth did you do without the Cardinal when he was away on religious matters?

Henry

I managed.

Catherine

But it must have been an additional strain . .

(He ignores her)

And just think, Lady Ann, Cardinal Wolsey brought back another Cardinal to help with religious matters . . .

(Lady Ann is smiling, enjoying this) . . . Religious matters certainly must have taken a turn for the worst . . have they Cardinal Wolsey?

Wolsey

They're fine my lady.

Catherine

Fine . . . fine. ? Two Cardinals at court and they're fine. Tch . . tch . . someone must have an awful big confession. Do you have an awful big confession Henry?

Henry

I do not have a confession.

Catherine

I heard rumors that you did.

Henry

They're false.

Catherine

I'm glad to hear that . . . I was worried that they might be true.

Henry

If you'd stop listening to rumors . . . (He decides better and does not finish)

Catherine

Oh . . . I will . . . I will . . . Ann, don't you dare tell me another rumor.

Ann

(Shocked) . . . I, my lady?

Catherine

Why yes, . . . didn't you tell me that the King . . .

I'm sure it was you . . .

Ann

(Dumbfounded) . . I, my lady?

Catherine

Wasn't it you . .? Let me see . . . who was it . . .

Henry

It doesn't matter . . would you kindly go about your business.

Catherine

But it does matter My lord . . Why is it you want to divorce me?

(Henry and Wolsey are both taken back by her blunt attack)

(She is deadly serious now)

Well..? Don't I get an answer? a reprieve? even your common criminals sometimes get a reprieve. (Silence) . . .

Ann, the King has lost his tongue . . .

Henry

. . . the King has not lost his tongue . . . where did you hear that . . . who did you hear that from?

Catherine

Oh . . rumor.

Henry

(Henry just shrugs his shoulders) Hupfffffffffff . .

Catherine

You could have told me.

Henry

Told you what?

Catherine

That you planned to divorce me . . . (Silence from Henry)
And that Cardinal Wolsey went to the Pope to execute the
sentence. . .

Henry

No one is being executed . . .

Catherine

Cardinal Wolsey, what did the Pontiff say?

Wolsey

Say?

Catherine

Speak? . . What did he speak to your question?

Wolsey

Oh . . . my lady . . . ah . . . not too much . . . he
wasn't feeling too well at the time . . .

Catherine

I thought he was pleasant . .

Wolsey

He was pleasant . . just not well . . .

Catherine

Oh too bad . . . Henry, you had a visitor waiting at
the door . . . another Cardinal . . .

Henry

Now ?

Catherine

Just outside the door . . I'll just sit here and be quiet . .

Henry

It's personal.

Catherine

I'm the Queen . . . I should share your intrigues . . . and
I won't even interfere . . .

Henry

Madam, you are always interfering in my affairs . . go to . .
you are out of favor . .

Catherine

I think I'll stay . .

Henry

You will leave immediately or by God I'll

Catherine

No need to get violent Henry

Henry

You . . . You . . .

Catherine

Come Ann . . the King is out of humor . . . My Lord, I'll
tell your good Cardinal to come in now . . . farewell,
Cardinal Wolsey . . . my Lord . . (They exit)

(Henry and Wolsey look at one another)

Guard

His eminence . . . Lorenzo Cardinal Compeggio of Rome . .
(Compeggio enters rather nervously)

Compeggio

(Bows) . . . my lord.

Wolsey

(Rather shaken but recovering quickly)

My lord, this is Lorenzo Cardinal Compeggio, of which we spoke. Cardinal Compeggio, The King of England, Henry Tudor.

Compeggio

I am most honored. (Bows again)

Henry

Rise my friend. It is I who am honored to entertain an emissary from his Holiness, the Pope.

Compeggio

Thank you, my Lord . . . (Nervously) . . . (Silence, then blurts out) . . . My Lord . . . excuse the urgency . . . but something terrible has happened.

Wolsey

(Alarmed) . . . I'm sure it can be set right quickly.

Henry

You have been treated well?

Compeggio

Oh, yes , . . most generously and kindly, my worthy Lord.

Henry

Then what is your complaint?

Compeggio

Oh, my Lord, please do not be angry with me. As you know, His Holiness, Pope Clement VII sent me to hear the case between Henry Tudor and Catherine of Aragon.

Henry

Yes.

Compeggio

And his Holiness, himself, instructed me personally to hear all the facts and find a favorable decision for all parties consistent with the wishes of his personal champion, Henry Tudor, King of England, Defender of the Faith.

Wolsey

My lord, didn't I tell you Pope Clement was a most wise Pope?

Compeggio

Oh yes, he is very wise and very generous of heart . . and he noted that you have been a loyal subject of the church and should be granted this boon as your first marriage was not consistent with canon law.

Wolsey

Excellent (Smiling, pleased with himself).

Compeggio

. . . and he said that Pope Julius should never have married you in the first place. Pope Clement said that it now seemed appropriate to correct this former breach of propriety. He also added that Pope Julius was especially taxed with the Protestants at that time which probably accounts for his error in judgment.

Henry

Yes, . there was a great deal of activity . . . Ha . . Ha . .
Ha . . (He laughs boisterously) . . . You do not know how

Henry

this pleases my heart, Cardinal Compeggio. I have been troubled since my marriage with the knawing thought that I am . . . well . . . unclean.

Compeggio

Oh, yes, my lord. To be out of grace with the Holy Scriptures is to be cast into Hell . . . and then there is that great resurrection of the spirit when you are at peace within yourself . . . when you feel the great . . . burden of calamity lifted from your brow and the joy within your soul of being once more . . . cleansed.

Henry

Yes . . . (Thinking) . . . (Emphatically) . . . yes! That's exactly how I feel. What are you to do?

Compeggio

My lord, I am to return to Rome.

Henry and Wolsey

What?

Compeggio

Oh, don't be angry with me my lord, please. It grieves my heart that I cannot give you grace. I will pray for you every night . . . and day.

Henry

But you said

Compeggio

Yes, my lord . . . but that was before . . . in Rome. I have been trying to tell you that I have received a message

Compeggio

to disptach to Rome immediately. Oh, I am sorry, my Lord.

Henry

But why? If Clement said to find judgment in my favor . . .
he must have . . .

Compeggio

My lord, the message asked me to explain that Charles V,
who as you know is our Holy Roman Emperor, will not allow
the casting aside of his aunt, your wife Catherine, and
the disinheritng of his cousin, your daughter, Mary,
my lord. I'm sure you realize the unpleasant situation
in which his Holiness is placed.

Henry

Damn! Charles! How did he find out about this? Wolsey,
you didn't . . . ?

Wolsey

Not a word, my lord.

Henry

I wonder if Catherine . . . bah . . . how could she? She
didn't even know (Back to Compeggio) . . . But what
about Canon law? . . . the curse of Leviticus? . . . am I
to remain illegally . . . married as a glaring monument
against all that is Holy? What does the Pope say about that?

Compeggio

My lord, he says . . . he is sure God can find forgiveness
in his heart . . . particularly since Pope Julius committed
the deed.

Henry

Then, Pope Clement can undo the deed.

Compeggio

My lord . . . he would like to

Henry

He will! . . . and why is he so fond of Charles now?

What happened to Henry?

Compeggio

Oh, my lord . . . Charles the V is our temporal protector.

Henry

Then what are my troops doing in France? . . . for the
second time

Compeggio

His Holiness is extremely embarrassed over this turn in
events . . . you see Charles has threatened his Holiness
that he will not support him in his war against the
Lutherans in Germany if your marriage is annulled.

Henry

Now the fox is changing color. Our Pope needs Charles
more than Henry. Well, you can tell his Holiness. . . .
that I don't like it. . . (He begins hollering like a boy)
I want my marriage annulled and I want it done now. Do
you hear me?

Wolsey

(Castigating) . . My lord.

Henry

And don't you, "my lord," me. . . you've made a mess of

Henry

things . . . He would be more than happy . . . Bah . . .
 What do we do now Cardinal Wolsey? (Mocking) . . . A most
 wise Pope . . . An extremely wise Pope . . . Hmmm! . . .
 Now, what am I going to do for an heir?

Wolsey

There must be a way, my lord.

Compeggio

I wish there was . . . but as his Holiness says . . . he is
 most embarrassed and wishes he could do something . . .
 but with things . . .

Henry

He can do something and he will . . . or . . . or . . .
 I'll send troops to help the Lutherans.

Compeggio

My lord, you would . . . help . . . the Lutherans?

Henry

Why not? The Pope's not helping me. Let him mull that
 around for a while.

Compeggio

Ohhhhhh . . . my . . .

Wolsey

Perhaps, my lord, we should let Cardinal Compeggio avail
 himself of our hospitality until we draft a note for him
 to take to Rome.

Henry

Yes . . . yes . . . There is no need for him to stay further.

Wolsey

Yes, my lord. (Wolsey motions to Compeggio that it is all right to leave).

Compeggio

(Backing out) . . . My lord, (bows) . . please do not be too angry. The Pope is most embarrassed . . . and he would like to please the King of England t'were it in his power . . I'm sure you understand his position, my grace.

Henry

Yes, yes. (Waves him to leave)

Compeggio

Thank you my lord. (Bows, exits).

Henry

Some lackluster lackey the Pope sent over! Catherine . . . (Thinking out loud) . . . Catherine got to him.

Wolsey

My lord?

Henry

The Queen must have got to Charles . . . How did she . . . How could she find out?

Wolsey

(Defending himself) My lord, I

Henry

You leaving for Rome . . . She must have thought it out when you left for Rome.

Wolsey

There was a great deal of rumor.

Henry

Yes, one of my errant knights probably spoke his mind to her
. . she would never figure it out by herself.

Wolsey

If she did tell Charles.

Henry

What do you mean?

Wolsey

Perhaps Charles learned of it in Rome.

Henry

The Pope is smarter than that.

Wolsey

Still . . .

Henry

And it's too soon. You just returned. .

Wolsey

Unless the Pope wanted Charles to know.

Henry

Hmmmmmm

Wolsey

Charles has many more troops and better disposed . . The
Pope could hardly fight Luther without Charles . . And as
you know, there is no great love between them.

Henry

Yes, Charles swore he'd never fight another church battle . .
after Clement became Pope.

Wolsey

And now he's sending troops

Henry

You don't think that Clement would use me. . ?

Wolsey

It is possible, my lord.

Henry

It still smacks of Catherine . . . she swore she would
embarrass me if she ever got the opportunity . . . Ha!
What better opportunity.

Wolsey

Still, the church . . .

Henry

Catherine . . I know she did it . . . It is so like her . . .
Ohhhhhhh I'd like to . . . If you ever want to get
married Wolsey . . . let me know . . . I'll give you Catherine.

Wolsey

My lord, it hardly seems fit that . . .

Henry

Don't take me so seriously . . . that's been your problem
Wolsey, you've always taken me so seriously.

Wolsey

(Flustered) . . Well, you are the King and I . . .

Henry

Ha . . Ha . . Ha . . There you go again. Your mother must
have borne you without a sense of humor.

Wolsey

When there are times for humor, I laugh my lord. This is not one of those times.

Henry

True. It hardly seems fitting that the King should laugh at his plight . . . isn't that right Wolsey?

Wolsey

If I were King, I would be concerned with a solution.

Henry

True again! But you indeed would have a dull kingdom.

Wolsey

But efficient, my lord.

(Henry blanches) (Pause)

Henry

(Slowly) What would you do, Wolsey? What would the son of a butcher do?

Wolsey

(Blanches) (Pause) . . . My lord, I would call the Pope's bluff.

Henry

Oh?

Wolsey

I know Pope Clement. He is merely trying to use you as the pawn in a game he's too little to play.

Henry

(Interested) Oh . . . ?

Wolsey

He should never have become Pope in the first place. I told them of his . . . shortcomings . . . but they wouldn't listen . . . Christendom will have to answer for this poor choice.

Henry

It's too bad you didn't become Pope. (Urging him on)

Wolsey

Charles promised me three times I would become Pope.

Henry

Oh. It's too bad you don't work for Charles . . . perhaps that would help.

Wolsey

(Sensing himself on dangerous ground) My lord, I serve Henry of England . . . in all ways.

Henry

What happened?

Wolsey

My lord?

Henry

Why didn't you become Pope?

Wolsey

Because Clement became Pope.

Henry

Oh.

Wolsey

My lord, we still need a solution to your problem.

Henry

Yes . . . Hmmm . . . if you were Pope . . . it would solve a lot of problems.

Wolsey

(Ignoring this) My lord . . expediency is the dog that wags the tail. Right now it is more expedient for Clement to deal with Charles than Henry . . . He needs Charles more than Henry. Thus, he informed Charles of your plans to force Charles to enter this Holy War.

Henry

You think so?

Wolsey

Yes, my lord.

Henry

You don't think it was Catherine?

Wolsey

The Queen . . ? Hardly my lord. I know Clement.

Henry

You said that! --

Wolsey

Well, it's true. (Long Pause)

Henry

What do you propose I do?

Wolsey

The church is out of favor with certain nobles. I'm sure there are ways to persuade them to back you if you were to apply certain pressures on Clement.

Henry

What pressures?

Wolsey

Tax church lands! Seize them for the crown! Hold them in chancellory!

Henry

And you . . . the papal legate to England . .

Wolsey

And Chancellor of the realm. I hold one duty as high as the other.

Henry

That is a bit strong. I've never wanted to quarrel with the church.

Wolsey

Exactly. Its main benefactor and what is your reward. Who was it that wrote pamphlets against Luther? Who sent troops against Luther and the Protestants in France. Look how Clement rewards you my lord.

Henry

Why it would split my kingdom. Dissention? I could have civil war.

Wolsey

My lord. There is dissention now. You need money. At this very moment plotters are preparing an heir for your kingdom. Indeed, you may have civil war anyhow.

Henry

I left governing my internal affairs to you.

Wolsey

(Retreating) I may have been a bit strong. But you still need an heir and your treasury is bare.

Henry

I don't like it. The Protestants are waiting for just such a cleavage in the church. If it goes wrong . . .

Wolsey

Clement has been meddling in Charles' affairs, Francis' affairs, and your affairs. It's time a King called his bluff to stop this nonsense.

Henry

Oh . . . you'd make a fine Pope.

Wolsey

(Ignoring this) Clement wouldn't dare let this pass. He would have to do something to keep Catholicism in tact. That something would be your marriage annulled. Then an heir would be no problem and you could continue your plans of consolidating and making a powerful England.

Henry

I don't know.

Wolsey

My lord. I know Clement. He would be more than happy to annul your marriage to correct his English affairs . . . lest this blight spread . . . and to all it would show that Henry Tudor is supreme in England, even over the church if he wishes.

Henry

I don't want to be supreme over the church . . . just in England. I happen to respect the church.

Wolsey

Of course. No one will doubt your motive and it will make your case even stronger. Everyone knows how you have championed the cause of the church . . . and there is precedent. Why it would look like the Pope acquiesces to Louis of France but not Henry of England. It would certainly put Henry Tudor in the shade of France.

Henry

You are so convincing . . . so convincing . . . every trick is used to convince me of your point of view . . .

Wolsey

My lord . . I only try to please you.

Henry

All right! Granted I need an heir . . . and for this reason and this reason only, I will listen to your foolish plan. But if it goes afoul . . . your star, Cardinal, will become a meteor in the sky.

Wolsey

Yes, my lord.

Henry

You're sure it will work.

Wolsey

Clement will never have the wit to cross you my lord.

Henry

There is no doubt.

Wolsey

(Slowly) There is no doubt. I can handle Clement.

Henry

Ha . . . Ha . . . you can handle Clement. The great test and Henry Tudor is once more the pawn . . . How I work myself into this position . . . every time . . . I'll never know.

Wolsey

My lord?

Henry

Now you have me working on your behalf.

Wolsey

I don't understand.

Henry

How will it look? If we win it will certainly put Clement in a bad light . . . and the hero is Cardinal Wolsey. You most certainly will gain support for your position as the next Pope of Christendom.

Wolsey

My thoughts are only to help you.

Henry

I wonder . . .

Wolsey

My lord . . . if you doubt . . .

Henry

I wonder how many people have used Henry Tudor for their own ends while helping Henry Tudor.

Wolsey

You are loyally served.

(Long pause) (Wolsey says cautiously)

Shall I draft the note to Rome, my Lord?

Henry

(Pause) (Slowly) Yes Yes . . . go about your
business

(Long pause. Wolsey stands uncomfortably not quite knowing
what to do).

Henry

(Himself again) Well, Wolsey . . . take your leave. . .
Let's see what history will record about this deed.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT II

ACT III

ACT III

(Three months later. As the scene opens, Skelton and Henry are on stage alone as in ACT I. There is great difference however in mood. Both are very nervous and melancholy. Skelton is again in Priest's habit.)

Skelton

I've written an eulogy for you.

Henry

(Not finding it funny). Why thank you, thank you very much.

Skelton

I call it, Upon a Dead Man's Head.

Henry

Bah . . . you're not funny today.

Skelton

No . . . it's not meant to be funny. I'll read to you.

(Reading) "Our days be dated
 to be checkmated
 No man may him hide
 from death hollow-eyed
 With sinews withered,
 With bones shivered,
 With his worm eaten maw,

Henry

Would you be quiet. Sinews withered . . . worm eaten maw . .
You're disgusting.

Skelton

It fits don't you think? Checkmated and all.

Henry

Hummpfffff.

Skelton

Well you must admit the Pope checkmated you . . at least
for the time-being.

Henry

Hummmmpfff! That jingle brains Wolsey. It will be done.
He's sure to go along with it. Now look where I am.

Skelton

Excommunicated.

Henry

Would you be quiet. I don't need you to remind me. You've
always talked too much anyhow . . . mouth almighty, chops
everlasting.

Skelton

Poets are supposed to talk.

Henry

Compose . . . write . . . not talk.

Skelton

I've always liked to talk.

Henry

I know!

Skelton

What are you going to do now?

Henry

What are you going to do now.

Skelton

Oh no, don't answer a question by asking one.

Henry

Ha! If Wolsey finds you you'll be squealing like a bloody pig.

Skelton

One would think the King of England could protect him.

Henry

Times have changed. I have enough trouble protecting myself.

Skelton

I'll say they've changed. Me! I had to sneak into court just to talk to you.

Henry

I heard.

Skelton

Well, what are you going to do about it? The Red Cap's men have been twice to Norfolk. I'm lucky I got here at all. Or were they your men? Funny, I could have sworn they were wearing the King's livery.

Henry

You go too far. One day, that tongue of yours is going to be cut out . . . and would I laugh then . . .

(Forced laugh).

Skelton

No you wouldn't. You would never let it happen. I'm the only one you can talk to . . . you told me yourself. That's why I came back . . . to give you your last rites.

Henry

Ha!

Skelton

Ha? You haven't been listening to your worthy Cardinal lately. You'll have a civil war before you know it. Catholics and Protestants are arming themselves and drawing and quartering each other.

Henry

You always did exaggerate.

Skelton

Past tense.

Henry

Well how did I know the Pope was going to excommunicate me . . . You would think at least he would try to pacify me . . . at least send a messenger . . but no . . he excommunicates me . . . (Raising his voice) . . . and I don't want to be excommunicated. I'm not going to die out of grace.

Skelton

That's why I came. I thought I could give you extreme unction.

Henry

You? Ha . . . Ha . . . You're a worse curse than excommunication. I'd do better having a murderer at the gallows giving me last rites than you.

Skelton

I'm still a priest.

Henry

When the Cardinal gets his hands on you . . . you will be a dead priest.

Skelton

What are you going to do about it? I'm tired of running from a Cardinal when I've got a King for a friend.

Henry

I'll do something.

Skelton

What?

Henry

I don't know. I've got enough problems. Hide out or something till he cools down. Then I'll talk to him.

Skelton

Why don't you get rid of him? He's done nothing but tear apart your kingdom since he's been chancellor.

Henry

I can't now. His day will come. He's the only thing I've got between my crown and anarchy.

Skelton

Ha! He's creating the anarchy.

Henry

(Raising his voice) His day will come! Now . . . he's my only hope with Rome and with More and his bunch.

Skelton

I heard. Sir Thomas More is very popular.

Henry

I know. He's threatened to fight my taxing the church and as he says . . . "My break with Christ." I didn't break with Christ . . . he broke with me. All I wanted was my marriage annulled . . . Bah . . . And now Thomas More is crying Tyranny . . . Tyranny . . . What tyranny?

Skelton

He'll sway a lot of people to his cause. I've seen that one in action.

Henry

Wolsey will handle him.

Skelton

I hope better than he did with the Pope.

Henry

That was Charles' fault . . . not Wolsey's.

Skelton

You always defend him . . . don't you?

Henry

I don't defend him. I need him and he's competent.

Skelton

We'll see.

Henry

Well I can't get rid of him now . . . ohhhh . . . worry about your own problems . . . leave mine alone How did you get in here anyhow.

Skelton

Old Dawes . . . your groom, let me in . . . He's the only sensible one in your kingdom.

Henry

Ha! He's so blind, it's a wonder he recognized you.

Skelton

Many are blind of late.

Henry

Have you anything else to say?

Skelton

Yes. Sit down. You're making me nervous walking around.

Henry

Bah

Skelton

What are you going to do, Henry?

Henry

(Slowly) I never wanted to break with the church.

You know that.

Skelton

Yes.

Henry

I rather fancied myself as a church scholar

I did enjoy writing those tracts against Luther . . now

I'm about as bad . .

Skelton

No.

Henry

Yes. The Protestants are hailing my excommunication as a new break in Catholocism . . . King Henry has become their rallying cry . . . and I hate Protestants.

Skelton

Well, there are different roads to the people's hearts.

Henry

I want the Catholic hearts . . . not the Protestants.

Skelton

They're all the same.

Henry

Ha!

Skelton

Well they're all your subjects.

Henry

True . . . but I want them to be Catholic subjects . . . and
I'm excommunicated.

Skelton

Just think . . . if you became a Protestant . . you could
start your own revolution . . you might become as famous
as Luther . . (Henry scowls at him) . . . Ha . . . Ha . . .
Ha . . . that would be irony . . . writing pamphlets and
sending troops against Luther . . . then becoming a
Protestant. Ha . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . You would have to
rescind your tracts . . .

Henry

You find humor in anything!

Skelton

True . . . Ha . . . Ha . . . but it is funny . .

Henry

Don't kill yourself laughing . . . I wouldn't want you to
cheat Wolsey.

Skelton

I wouldn't want to do that . . Where is he . . . I'd feel safer knowing his whereabouts.

Henry

Seeing Catherine.

Skelton

Is she still under guard?

Henry

Yes, she's still under guard . . What was I to do with her . . . She found out Lady Ann was pregnant by me and tried to kill me.

Skelton

What did she do to Lady Ann?

Henry

Well, she isn't her lady-in-waiting anymore.

Skelton

Court is buzzing with the scandal. It's the best piece of gossip since your bastard son was discovered.

Henry

Let them buzz.

Skelton

What are you going to do with Ann?

Henry

I don't know. You would be surprised . . . that little milktoast girl who always said . . "Yes, my lord . . . No my lord" . . . she demands a high price for her favors. . .

Skelton

What?

Henry

She wants to be Queen . . . She has more spunk than I
ever imagined.

Skelton

You could start a new trend . . . besides Protestantism . .
You could make everyone in your kingdom take two wives.

Henry

Ha! It almost appeals to me.

Skelton

How did Catherine find out Ann was pregnant?

Henry

She used her eyes.

Skelton

Oh. That big?

Henry

That big.

Skelton

Well, maybe she'll have a son.

Henry

Then I'll have two bastard sons.

Skelton

True.

Henry

You're not much help.

Skelton

I just write poems and mind my own business.

Henry

Ha! Ha . . Ha . . You haven't minded your own business since the day you were born.

Skelton

Like every Englishman . . . I'm interested in my country.

Henry

You're noseey about your country.

Skelton

I like to know how the river is running . . forewarned is forearmed.

Henry

I hope you keep that well informed about Wolsey.

Skelton

I try I understand he killed Archbishop Fisher . . the Queen's confessor . .

Henry

He didn't kill him . . . the old man objected to Catherine being under guard . . . he challenged the sentry and lost.

Skelton

It doesn't look good.

Henry

I know. What am I to do? I didn't tell him to get himself killed. I rather liked the old man. Now I'm a murderer.

Skelton

There is some talk to that

Henry

Well, I'm not . . . I can't be blamed for every bungling in my court.

Henry

And now Thomas More has taken Archbishop Fisher as his rallying cry . . . he says he died to stop the tragedy that is sundering Christendom I even had the guard put to death . . . and that bothered me for he was only doing his job . . . anything to placate More . . . but he still foments rebellion and stretches the truth.

Skelton

You do have your problems . . . More could be a serious threat.

Henry

He must be stopped but how? . . . I certainly hope Wolsey can reason with him.

Skelton

Some chance.

Henry

The Cardinal is Papal legate to England . . .

Skelton

He's considered more chancellor than papal legate . . .
In fact . . . if I were the Pope . . . I'd excommunicate him too.

Henry

Bah . . .

Skelton

Well it stands to reason . . . and who gets it in the neck . . . the poor parish priest . . . me.

Henry

You'll get it in the neck all right.

Skelton

(Grimaces) oooooohhhhh.

Henry

You should leave . . . Wolsey should be reporting soon.

Skelton

I hate to leave a sinking ship.

Henry

Will you get out of here!

Skelton

Only teasing . . . what are you going to do?

Henry

Wolsey thinks I should call the Pope's bluff and . . .
 delcare myself supreme in England in Church as well as
 State . . . surely then the Pontiff would come around
 despite Charles . . . and he's been doing badly in Germany
 . . . so the time may be right . . . he can't excommunicate
 me again.

Skelton

True.

Henry

What could he do?

Skelton

What would your subjects do?

Henry

Clement should declare himself before my subjects get wind
 of it . . .

Skelton

Cardinal Wolsey certainly has a way of forcing hands . . .
I would be sure it was going to work before I ventured
on that path.

Henry

Wolsey has been sounding out selected nobles . . . There
doesn't seem to be too much opposition since I'm
already out of grace with the church.

Skelton

It seems to me that someone around here never learns.

Henry

Well, I have to do something . . . I can't be excommunicated
and say thank you very much.

Skelton

You could repent.

Henry

Repent? . . . for asking for an annulment? He used me so
now I'm going to use him.

Skelton

I've got to go . . . your axeman will be here soon

Henry

Where . . . ?

Skelton

I don't know . . . I'll . . .

Henry

Take sanctuary in Westminster . . . he won't touch you there
and then I'll know where to find you. . . .

Skelton

Yes, my lord.

Henry

Take care . . . I'll see to it that he doesn't touch you.

I would be wary of accidents . . . however . . .

Skelton

That I will . . . no wonder you want me to go to Westminster

. . . you don't think your Chancellor would go against your orders . . . do You?

Henry

Never!! . . . And get caught . . . that's why he's so competent.

Skelton

I'll take my leave . . . take care, my lord. I would like to see the Tudors remain on the throne of England . . .

Henry

Off with you friend!

Skelton

My leige . . . (Skelton bows and exits)

(Henry looks fondly after him) (Sits . . . Puts his head in his hands. Noise of laughing and giggling off)

Henry

Who's there?

(More giggling)

Henry

Guard!

(Ann Enters, obviously pregnant, laughing and giggling followed by Cardinal Wolsey close behind her. One should get the impression he was pinching her bottom although we never know)

Wolsey

Ah . . . my lord (he bows).

Ann

My worthy lord. (She bows).

Wolsey

Ann has been telling me the baby has been kicking. Ha . . .

Ha . . . Ha. Would you like to feel my lord?

Henry

No, I would not like to feel.

Ann

Oh . . . but Henry . . . it's your son.

Henry

Son? How do you know it's a son?

Ann

It must be . . . it kicks so hard.

Wolsey

Ha . . . Ha . . . And why not . . . it's probably a strapping son . . . worthy of a King, my lord.

Henry

It could be anything.

Ann

Come feel Henry . . she takes his hand and puts it on her belly.

Henry

I don't feel anything.

Ann

(She starts moving his hand around on her belly)

Oh, but you will.

Henry

(Pulling his hand away) I don't feel anything.

Ann

(Serious) When it starts kicking again I'll let you know.

Wolsey

It was, my lord . . . it was.

Henry

Did you feel?

Wolsey

(Embarrassed) Why no . . . no . . . of course I didn't feel
. . . Lady Ann was just telling me . . .

Henry

Oh . . . How is Catherine . . . ?

Wolsey

As she was before . . . estranged . . . I think she must be
losing her mind . . .

Henry

Why?

Ann

She's always talking about you . . . Henry . . . and how she
will revenge her honor . . .

Henry

That's not too crazy . . .

Wolsey

She is a threat . . . a threat to you . . . not only physically but by her influence You must do something about her.

Henry

What?

Wolsey

Send her away or

Henry

or

Wolsey

(Changing the subject rapidly) . . Let's not talk business now my lord . . Lady Ann is here for your pleasure.

Henry

I'm not in the mood for pleasure.

Wolsey

You have been so melancholy . . . I thought . . .

Henry

I'll seek my own pleasure . . . This is an odd role for you Cardinal Wolsey . . . bringing me pleasure . .

Ann

My lord . . . he did not bring me . . . we met by the door . . . we were both coming to you at the same time.

Henry

Oh. (Not believing them)

Wolsey

Yes. Lady Ann and I were both anxious over our Sovereign
. . . particularly after the news of the day.

Henry

What news?

Wolsey

I've sounded out certain nobles and talked to Sir Thomas
More . . . he refuses to take the oath of Supremacy declar-
ing you are supreme in England . . . He called it amoral
expediency . . . Bahhhhh . . . you should have heard him
. . . it was treason.

Henry

Treason!

Wolsey

The way he talked . . . flouting his pompous airs . . . the
state . . . it is not for the good of the state . . . who
is he to decide what is good for the State?

Henry

Treason . . . that's the first time that word has been
uttered . . . treason . . . what an ugly word . . .

Wolsey

His word is tyranny . . . its been picked up in the market-
places . . . alehouses . . . and on the road . . . the
populace is getting surly . . . the cry is tyranny.

Henry

I've heard.

Wolsey

Have you heard that no heir is adding supporters to Thomas
More . . . that nobles are talking of removing you from
the throne . . .

Henry

They dare

Wolsey

I've done my best to keep them down . . . but now . .
with the Pope's refusal . . . and no heir . . . and Thomas
More . . . I don't know what's going to happen.

Henry

Nothing is going to happen . . . What about the Act of
Supremacy . . . I thought that was going to sway the Pope.

Wolsey

It may . . . if you decide on the Act of Supremacy . .
You have not given me your decision . . .

Henry

Abolishing Papal jurisdiction is a big step . . .

Wolsey

A very big step my lord . . . a step that could tear your
kingdom asunder.

Henry

It was your idea . . .

Wolsey

And still is . . .

Henry

You talk in riddles . . . I can't understand you.

Wolsey

(Almost under his breath) What is to become of Queen Catherine?

Henry

What?

Wolsey

(Louder) The Queen. What are you going to do with the Queen?

Henry

What should I do with the Queen.

Wolsey

She tried to kill you.

Henry

So.

Wolsey

Men have been killed for lesser offenses.

Henry

Of course . . . a man . . . but she's a woman.

Wolsey

She's been under guard for over a month . . . You can't go on procrastinating for ever . . . while you ponder your enemies are pounding and soon they'll be at this very door.

Henry

Bah.

Ann

It's true, my lord. I've heard rumor of discontent . . .

Henry

Midwives tales.

Wolsey

They are not tales . . . but the fabric of truth . . .
Your men are in the countryside every day keeping the popu-
lace in check . . .

Henry

It will pass . . .

Wolsey

Only if you act . . . Catherine is the only one who stands
between you and a united kingdom.

Henry

(Disbelieving) Catherine?

Wolsey

If she were not around the Pope would have no cause.
You would not need an annulment . . . (Looking at Ann)
you could remarry and have a male heir.

Henry

No I

Wolsey

A strapping son to follow Henry . . . (To Ann) (Motioning)
Here are the means . . .

Henry

It is not Catherine's fault

Wolsey

Fault? There is no question of fault . . . but expediency . .
you yourself have said . . . some must be subordinate to
the state . . . in this case . . . Catherine would be
sacrificing herself to preserve and consolidate your kingdom.

Henry

She should not have to pay for my errors.

Wolsey

Sometimes it happens that way.

Henry

No.

Wolsey

And you have every right . . . she did try to kill you.

No one will blame you for your actions.

Henry

It's not right.

Wolsey

A King cannot be sentimental. You have a kingdom to preserve . . . subjects to serve . . . you have wanted to consolidate England . . . here are your means . . .

(He produces a paper and puts it in front of Henry)

Henry

What is that?

Wolsey

Your order . . .

Henry

My order?

Wolsey

To do away with Catherine.

Henry

No! No! No! I won't have it (He throws the paper on the floor)

Wolsey

(Picks up the paper) My lord . . . It is as you wish . . .
I only wanted you to see the solution to your problems . .
one . . . woman.

Henry

I cannot kill a woman.

Wolsey

As you wish . . . I hope Sir Thomas More will be as
kindly with you . . .

Henry

More . . . More . . . what does he know?

Wolsey

He knows enough to join forces with her.

Henry

What is it . . you speak?

Wolsey

Catherine . . she is in secret collusion with More . . .

Henry

How do you know?

Wolsey

I have eyes and ears. She will topple you.

Henry

She wouldn't dare.

Wolsey

She is I can prove it . . .

Henry

Prove it.

Wolsey

You will see . . . you will see the proof . . . Lady Ann saw a letter from Thomas More.

Henry

Is that true?

Ann

I saw a letter . . . it could have been Sir Thomas More my lord.

Henry

Is that your proof?

Wolsey

I have more . . . Guard! (Guard enters--) Bring in the Queen now.

(Guard exits).

Henry

Here . . . you have her here?

Wolsey

Outside the door.

Henry

I don't want to see her.

Wolsey

You must you must make your decision if you make an example out of her . . . No one will dare cross Henry Tudor . . . She will even be a lesson to Thomas More . . .

Ann

It is not as if you've had a great love between you my lord everyone knows how sterile your marriage has been

Ann

. . . . her tongue and affrontery to you in public is widely discussed . . . and she has not been able to produce for you a suitable heir . . . I am a woman . . . and under the circumstances I do not hold you to blame.

Wolsey

My lord, you are excommunicated . . . you are out of grace with the church . . . the curse of Leviticus . . . you can't stay wed to her anyhow . . . this is the solution . . .

(He puts the paper back on the desk in front of Henry)

A King cannot rule a kingdom . . . a Catholic kingdom and be excommunicated . . . you must act . . . now . . .

(Two guards enter with Catherine. She is disheveled)

Henry

No! I don't want to see her.

(They stop at the door . . . not knowing what to do)

Wolsey

Look at her.

Henry

Take her away!

(They attempt to go. Wolsey motions them to stop)

Catherine

Henry . . will you make them let me go or I'll

Wolsey

That is what's standing in your way . . .

Catherine

Henry? (Trying to get free from the guards)

Ann

The Cardinal is right my lord.

Catherine

Henry!

Henry

No . . . No . . . it's . . .

Wolsey

You must act now . . . don't lose your resolve . . . a
united England . . . an heir to the throne . . .

(As Wolsey talks Catherine is yelling "Henry" in the
background)

a chance to show that Henry Tudor is supreme in England . . .
a way out of your difficulties with Pope Clement . . .

(As Wolsey talks he starts rising in crescendo and goes
faster and faster) . . . you once more can receive the

benediction of grace and show your enemies how noble yet
how powerful you are . . . Thomas More will back down if
you behead Catherine . . . you must act . . . you could
lose your kingdom . . . you could lose everything . . .

You must sign . . . you must sign . . . (Ann joins in
"sign" . . . "sign")

Sign the paper . . . (pointing at Catherine) That is the
way to death . . . (He grabs Henry's hand and puts it on
Ann's belly) . . . this is the way to life . . .

(Henry hesitatingly scrawls his name. Wolsey quickly picks it up and waves the guards out. As they turn and leave Catherine is screaming. . .

Catherine

Henry No Henry (As she is led offstage she continues screaming) . . . Henry . . . Henry . . . (Wolsey is standing mute.. A slight smile..Ann is holding Henry's hand to her belly . . . one arm on his shoulder A trace of a tear can be detected rolling down Henry's cheek as Catherine is dragged away.

CURTAIN

-END-

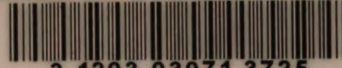
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