

1786 Words

A Diary Entry on the Eve of the Battle of Bosworth Field - Sunday, August 21, 1485

I never meant to reign King. Should I fall tomorrow, this will not be the tragedy of Richard III, but the story of how two brothers of York, squandered our father's dynasty, and how I, the third, tried valiantly to save it.

That cloud of Tudor that hung over our house had retreated into the troughs of the swelling sea, and was swallowed and buried in our rising tide. But even from within the watery tomb of the seas, that salty Tudor vapor rose and permeated the cracks and crevices of our House of York.

Ah that vile, stinking House of Tudor! That Leviathan Dynasty... that primordial eel!

I understood and honored my duty to our House of York. I fought for my King, my brother, Edward IV, in that War of Roses and played whatever part I had to, in order to see to the demise of that fraudulent King Henry VI and his son.

My brother, twice King Edward IV, ruled fairly, I admit, and he was right to charge our brother, Clarence, of treason. Clarence's allegiances were dubious at best and perhaps better suited for jealous Clarence himself than for our prestigious House of York. But, as Jesu would, I forgive him - for if I were prone to the jealousy and ambition of a middle child, and torn between blood and soil, I am not sure I could find my loyalty anything but torn in bloody two; to choose between subservience to your spuriously sovereign king or fight for your own father's divine legacy?

But my brother was a weak and indecisive ruler. He led with his heart on all matters. His wavering resolve in executing Clarence was evident of that, as was his marriage. (I was able to remedy the former, but not the latter.) Rather than further secure the York dynasty with a strategic union, he married for lust the golden-haired daughter of a traitor. Elizabeth spent her days further weakening Edward's resolve where it suited her, while plotting and sowing the seeds of her own progenies' demise. Her husband's heart, once beating strong with his final victory over Henry, began to strain under his portly, piggish paunch.

The death of my dear brother Henry brought upon our house a dogwood winter; those sprouting seedlings of York planted so joyfully before his death would never come to harvest. His death, inevitable, premature, stirred further the tides of the old vendettas of the warring roses, which had died neither with the death of Henry VI or his own. The Princes were both too young to assume the crown. Their meddling mother Queen Elizabeth and her cohorts, even before his death, had churned the waters of chaos that would continue to erode the soil of our Father's England; the crest of each wave of York sowing deeper mistrust, suspicion, and an evermore volatile crown.

And Anne. Oh dear, sweet Anne! She was there for the taking. The spoils of war. Wooed not just by my charm but by House's growing power... the legitimacy of the reign of York could not be denied. She knew it was her destiny to one day be queen, and so, her hand was mine. Oh! To think she'd marry her husband's killer? It was no truer that I killed her father-in-law and husband, than if she had killed my own father. To that end, allow me to clear her name. But she knew clearly that as the wife of the Prince she was next in line to the throne, and that as his widow she may as well have stood with her feet buried in the sands at the bottom of the sea. But with her hand joined to mine, and with her already knowing the treachery of Richmond's kind, marriage to me was a furious tread to an adjacent wave. Her outward disdain toward me was thus devised to create some plausible deniability should she need to flip allegiances again. But, make no mistake, Anne loved me. And regardless of my hand in her death being truth or lie, to Lady Anne, there was much more than met the eye - I tell you it was *she* who "turned yon fellow in his lonely grave", and not I!

And if I did have some hand in her demise? Am I obliged to confess to any of you? No - I would only confess before the countenance of God, and only if my misdeeds were not His will. But the truth is she poisoned herself, albeit on my own leaden shilling, and of her own briny volition. I wept for Anne's death - she had sailed under the spindrift curl of this last wave of York toward the shores of Gehenna for many years...

And my dear nephews! Those doe-eyed farrows - their deaths were never on the forefront of my mind, for their youth and innocence could yet be molded to reinforce our family's divine right. But on the day I discussed young nephew's coronation, it was made clear adopting them as my progeny, and making of them my loyal sons, had been made needlessly difficult, if not impossible, by the words of their meddling mother and her gossip-hags. The path of their treachery against their own father's legacy were paved upon the deaths of their uncle and halfbrother.

Oh how those “mighty gossips” all mourned the untimely deaths of their husbands and sons! And in their grief that insidious House of Tudor marred further my legacy, and painted me not just a villain, but the devil himself - that I would not be so mourned should I unearth my own untimely demise.

And Margaret, the prophetess so they say. Old and battle-worn is she. A dusty old Queen set aptly upon the black square of the board. A cunning strategist, through her scornful curses, she reaped the bounty of her own loathful vision in the mouths of the other wailing widows. But in her I see now, like I, she worked loyally for her House, albeit a false one, and she nearly succeeded in again, usurping our throne. Empathy aside, the old hag was the head of the ubiquitous Tudor sea-beast, and in hindsight, it may have served us better to lop it off, as it was *she* who cursed my brother’s wife and who was determined to prove *me* a villain and make the legacy of York forever bent and unfinished.

And was I not, then, simply a man of my time? I was Duke of Gloucester. Well-enough loved. You see, ambition never belonged to me. It was instead coveted by my duty. The advancement of the House of York, the legacy of the White Boar, was the cross I, myself, bore. What good is a ruthless line of rulers? What King toes further back behind the line? What King fails to couple his cunning and aggression?

I accepted my dead brother’s throne only at the behest of Buckingham (once my Marc Antony... now, my Brutus.) But what King, what champion of the House of York, wishes a temporary reign while he still lives and breathes? And what if my dear nephews had the cowardice and naïveté of my brother Edward, that they should hesitate at the execution of their own warrants for the death of traitors? And what if they should join their mother and her fellow “gentlewomen” into falsely making the loyal servants of the House of York, me, the enemy to our own house? How could I, but by their deaths, ensure the future of the reign of York? These young boys, already over-fed at their mother’s teats, would be subjected to their veiled smiles of deceit, flattery and fawn.

I, the youngest of my brothers, *and* by some fateful coincidence, my father’s namesake, was at a crossroads; one road upon which I was destined to be ruled by Tudor-indoctrinated, sharp-tongued babes, the other to rule as the only Son of York yet worthy of the throne.

Was I not, after all, Lord Protector of the Realm?

So with heart-felt forgiveness for my poor Clarence’s treachery, for Edwards’s loveblindness and glut, and of my dear nephews’ sweet naïveté, I chose to play the role of the devil to Tudor’s England. But in my loyalty to the divine right of our family’s throne, I played not just the role of saint, but of God.

That G, Edward dreamt? That raging sea? That was me! For *I* am the hand of God, *and* the scourge of Him. That G, me, that is, I and I -- gladly take blame, if it means the divine right of the House of York is bored into the heart of England!

I suppose my bent shadow serves well-enough as the object of the Tudor's derision. Let them have it. Let them cower in it. Upon the back of Surrey, my faithful steed, I shall ride; she will be swift beneath me as I slash and burn away the stench and fog of Tudor, for I, Richard III, am the cruel sword of the Lord, fated to cut down the tentacles of that creeping sea serpent!

The Sun of York, will finally rise over England. The bones of Richmond, Stanley and his widow-wife, will be picked clean and bleached in the depths of the sea! My niece will be a Kingmaker, the *true* Sons of England shall be sown in her womb! Tomorrow, that crimson battlefield will hear the squall of God's victory! I, the most worthy son of Richard II! I, King Richard III! I, His Chosen! I, the White Boar of York! I, King!

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The restless night had brought with it 11 ghosts; all told me "despair and die." From a fever dream, I awoke, lamenting the death of my pale horse. I uncurled myself from my fetal shape, and dared to peer outside toward the charnel angle. The sun will not shine today.

What a sad scourge am I? That God should *now*, on the eve of my fate, bestow upon me a cowardice of mind? What is this coward-conscience? What does it mean? Does Richmond, too, feel the weight of his own family's treachery? Or has this dark morning only brought forth the fruit of *my* sins ripened under this black stratus-sky? Would God be so fickle to hear the curses of that ancient queen, and let from Heaven fly his indignation and ire?

Should I find my death on that bloody battlefield, I wonder... will I be greeted as the Prodigal Son before the white-flowered gates of Heaven or the rosy'd lichgates of Purgatory?