

EDWARD III

William Shakespeare?

- COUNTESS: Pardon my boldness, my thrice gracious Lord;
Let my intrusion here be called my duty,
That comes to see my sovereign how he fares.
Sorry I am to see my liege so sad:
What may thy subject do to drive from thee
Thy gloomy consort, sullome melancholy?
- KING EDWARD: Ah, Lady, I am blunt and cannot strew
The flowers of solace in a ground of shame:--
Since I came hither, Countess, I am wronged.
- COUNTESS: Now God forbid that any in my house
Should think my sovereign wrong! Thrice gentle King,
Acquaint me with your cause of discontent.
- KING EDWARD: How near then shall I be to remedy?
- COUNTESS: As near, my Liege, as all my woman's power
Can pawn it self to buy thy remedy.
- KING EDWARD: If thou speakst true, then have I my redress:
Engage thy power to redeem my Joys,
And I am joyful, Countess; else I die.
- COUNTESS: I will, my Liege.
- KING EDWARD: Swear, Countess, that thou wilt.
- COUNTESS: By heaven, I will.
- KING EDWARD: Then take thy self a little way a side,
And tell thy self, a King doth dote on thee;
Say that within thy power it doth lie
To make him happy, and that thou hast sworn
To give him all the Joy within thy power:
Do this, and tell me when I shall be happy.
- COUNTESS: All this is done, my thrice dread sovereign:
That power of love, that I have power to give,
Thou hast with all devout obedience;
Employ me how thou wilt in proof thereof.
- KING EDWARD: Thou hearst me say that I do dote on thee.
- COUNTESS: If on my beauty, take it if thou canst;
Though little, I do prize it ten times less;
If on my virtue, take it if thou canst,

For virtue's store by giving doth augment;
Be it on what it will, that I can give
And thou canst take away, inherit it.

KING EDWARD: It is thy beauty that I would enjoy.

COUNTESS: O, were it painted, I would wipe it off
And dispossess my self, to give it thee.
But, sovereign, it is soldered to my life:
Take one and both; for, like an humble shadow,
It haunts the sunshine of my summer's life.

KING EDWARD: But thou mayst lend it me to sport with all.

COUNTESS: As easy may my intellectual soul
Be lent away, and yet my body live,
As lend my body, palace to my soul,
Away from her, and yet retain my soul.
My body is her bower, her Court, her abbey,
And she an Angel, pure, divine, unspotted:
If I should leave her house, my Lord, to thee,
I kill my poor soul and my poor soul me.

KING EDWARD: Didst thou not swear to give me what I would?

COUNTESS: I did, my liege, so what you would I could.

KING EDWARD: I wish no more of thee than thou maist give:--
Nor beg I do not, but I rather buy--
That is, thy love; and for that love of thine
In rich exchange I tender to thee mine.

COUNTESS: But that your lips were sacred, my Lord,
You would profane the holy name of love.
That love you offer me you cannot give,
For Caesar owes that tribute to his Queen;
That love you beg of me I cannot give
For Sara owes that duty to her Lord.
He that doth clip or counterfeit your stamp
Shall die, my Lord; and will your sacred self
Commit high treason against the King of heaven,
To stamp his Image in forbidden metal,
Forgetting your allegiance and your oath?
In violating marriage sacred law,
You break a greater honour than your self:
To be a King is of a younger house
Than to be married; your progenitor,
Sole reigning Adam on the universe,
By God was honoured for a married man,
But not by him anointed for a king.
It is a penalty to break your statutes,

Though not enacted with your highness' hand:
How much more, to infringe the holy act,
Made by the mouth of God, sealed with his hand?
I know, my sovereign, in my husband's love,
Who now doth loyal service in his wars,
Doth but so try the wife of Salisbury,
Whither she will hear a wanton's tale or no,
Lest being therein guilty by my stay,
From that, not from my liege, I turn away.

Exit.