SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an excerpt - an appetiser, if you will - from a full Samuel French title.

This sample is just for you to try out, and it can't be used for performance, downloaded, printed or distributed in any way.

Take it for a whirl and see if it tickles your fancy!

For more information about licensing this or other shows, or to browse thousands more plays and theatre books to buy please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

SF PERUSALS

Two Planks and A Passion

A Play

Anthony Minghella

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

SAMUELFRENCH-LONDON.CO.UK
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

Copyright © 1985 by Anthony Minghella
All Rights Reserved

TWO PLANKS AND A PASSION is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth, including Canada, the United States of America, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-01604-2

www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk

www.samuelfrench.com

FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED KINGDOM AND WORLD
EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA
plays@SamuelFrench-London.co.uk
020 7255 4302/01

Each title is subject to availability from Samuel French,

depending upon country of performance.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *TWO PLANKS AND A PASSION* is subject to a licensing fee. Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

The professional rights in this play are controlled by Judy Daish Associates, 2, St Charles Place, London W10 6EG.

No one shall make any changes in this title for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall upload this title, or part of this title, to any social media websites.

The right of Anthony Minghella to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

TWO PLANKS AND A PASSION

The play was first presented in 1983 at the Northcott Theatre, Exeter, in a production commissioned and directed by Stewart Trotter and designed by Tim Reed, with the following cast of characters:

Edward Young, Pinner's labourer — Keith Bartlett
Will Bluefront, Painter's labourer — David Oakley
Geoffrey Le Kolve, Master, Painter's Guild — Ted Valentine
Walter Paynter, apprentice painter — Sean Aita
Father Henry Melton, Pardoner and Chaplain to the Painter's Guild — Patrick Romer
Thomas Zachary, Painter's labourer — Mike Burnside
Sarah Zachary, his wife and lady-in-waiting to the Le Kolves — Heather Williams
Kathryn Le Kolve, wife of Geoffrey — Rosalind March
Richard II, King of England — Mark Jax
Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford — Saul Reichlin
Anne of Bohemia, Queen of England — Amanda Orton
Alice Selby, Mayoress of York — Amanda Walker
William Selby, Mayor of York, Merchant — Raymond Cross
Jolyf Absolom, Herod in Merchants' play — David Oakley
Archbishop of York — Mike Burnside
God the Father
Adam, a servant boy
and assorted **gods, Christs, soldiers** and **crowd**

TWO PLANKS AND A PASSION

Subsequently the play was revised and presented at Greenwich Theatre in 1984 with the following cast of characters:

Edward Young, Pinner's labourer	David Fielder
Will Bluefront, Painter's labourer	Toby Salaman
Geoffrey Le Kolve, Master, Painter's Guild	Roger Sloman
Walter Paynter, apprentice painter	Chris Jury
Father Henry Melton, Pardoner and Chaplain to the Painter's Guild	Fred Pearson
Thomas Zachary, Painter's labourer	Chas Bryer
Sarah Zachary, his wife and lady-in-waiting to the Le Kolves	Corrine Ransome
Kathryn Le Kolve, wife of Geoffrey	Gillian Barge
Richard II, King of England	Michael Maloney
Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford	Christopher Fulford
Anne of Bohemia, Queen of England	Cathryn Harrison
Alice Selby, Mayoress of York	Madge Hindle
William Selby, Mayor of York, Merchant	John Arthur
Jolyf Absolom, Herod in Merchants' play	David Fielder
Archbishop of York	Chas Bryer
God the Father	Toby Salaman

Adam, a servant boy
and assorted **gods, Christs, soldiers** and **crowd**

The play directed by Danny Boyle
Designed by Deirdre Clancy

This Acting Edition is based on the revised version of the play

ACT I

Scene 1 Outside the Pageant House
Scene 2 The Mayor's house. The bedroom
Scene 3 The Mayor's house. A room below
Scene 4 The Mayor's house. The bedroom
Scene 5 A room in the Le Kolves' house
Scene 6 The Streets
Scene 7 Walter's workshop
Scene 8 The Mayor's gardens

ACT II

Scene 1 The Streets
Scene 2 The Le Kolves' house. The bedroom
Scene 3 The Mayor's house. The bedroom
Scene 4 Downstairs in the Mayor's house
Scene 5 The Le Kolves' house. The bedroom
Scene 6 Outside the Pageant House
Scene 7 The Mayor's house. The bedroom
Scene 8 Downstairs in the Mayor's house
Scene 9 Upstairs at the Mayor's house/Upstairs at the Le Kolves' house
Scene 10 The Streets
Scene 11 The Le Kolves' house
Scene 12 Hen Street

The action of the play passes in and around the streets of York

Period: 1392

PRODUCTION NOTE

The setting for the play, when presented at Greenwich, was a large open stage with very little dressing. Two small raised areas, L and R break up the flatness of the area. The "common ground" on stage level represents several playing areas: outside the Pageant House; the Streets; the Mayor's garden; downstairs in the Selby household and Hen Street. The raised area SR represents the Mayor's bedroom. The raised area SL represents the dining-room in the Le Kolve house in Act I and Kathryn Le Kolve's bedroom in Act II.

Although the play is divided up into scenes this is merely to show where lighting changes and changes of mood occur. The action should flow smoothly and swiftly from one "scene" to the next, with no visible break.

Ideally, there should be an opening in the stage floor DSC into which the foot of the cross can be placed, for the rehearsal of the play.

ACT I*

SCENE 1

Bells for five. Late May. Early morning. 1392

Outside the Pageant House. This is a sort of medieval garage and is located in York. It houses the Pageant Wagon of the Painters' Guild, shared with the Pinners and Latterners. These three crafts play the Crucifixion Play, the thirty-fifth in the Corpus Christi Cycle

Will Bluefront and Edward Young appear, each dragging a plank of wood. During the scene they join the two planks into a cross by lashing the wood together with rope

Edward Don't it set your heart humming?
Will What?
Edward Doing this. Making the cross. Getting together. Saying the words.
Will Says my words every evening. Before I sleeps.
Edward Do you! And I do!
Will 'Stead of prayers.
Edward This is different though, eh? Every year I just have to see our wagon, have a dibble round the costumes, put on my helmet, pull out the planks and I gets a little flutter going.
Will (*grumpily*) I'm not starting before cakes and ale.
Edward Well, I doubt we'll get breakfast this year, Will. Everything's cut back, innit? I heard speak of another penny wanted from us for the play.
Will Who says? I'm not giving another penny. Anyway, we shouldn't have to pay if we're speaking in the pageant.
Edward That's all very well for our Guild, but say you were doing the *Harrowing of Hell*? Fifty odd nipper in that all told. If they never paid up there'd be no play.
Will That's the Merchants' do anyway. What's a penny to them? They shit pennies.
Edward I shit a shilling once. It hurt. Picked it up at a fair and swallowed it for safe keeping.
Will They gets ham at the Merchants' rehearsals. And best beer.
Edward Well . . . we gets the better play.
Will Now that's true. Where's the others then?
Edward Oh, be along shortly, I expect.
Will I half thought to find Thomas pinned up on the cross from last year.

---

*N.B. Paragraph 3 on page ii of this Acting Edition regarding photocopying and video-recording should be carefully read.

Edward Not like Walter to be late, mind.
Will He'll be sent to search for the priest who'll no doubt be sleeping somewhere he shouldn't.
Edward Shouldn't be rude about the parson, Will.
Will Well . . . If I puts my dick where I didn't ought it's a curse, Edward. If he do 'tis a blessing. Where's the fairness in that? So that's me and I'll not start before I'm given my breakfast.
Edward (*as a distraction*) Saw a dead heron this morning, me. That's bad luck. Means a famine.
Will Plague.
Edward Aye. Or plague.
Will No—just plague.
Edward Aye, it were a dead heron. Down by Ouse Bridge.
Will What do you do then? At night?
Edward What do you mean?
Will When you're doing your words . . . who does my part?
Edward Our missus. What about you?
Will No, I do it myself, me. I do all the parts.
Edward The whole play?
Will Aye.
Edward Oh.
Will I has to, Edward. I forget, see. Last year forgot my words, didn't I? Thought I'd get a fine.
Edward Not forgot. Stumbled.
Will Forgot.
Edward 'Tis easy done.
Will No. My brain's rusting. 'Nother year or two I'll be put out to pasture . . . I'll be off the wagon and down on the road pulling you boys round, station to station. Then you'll be first soldier.
Edward Well.
Will No, if I give him to anyone it'll be to you. Unless your missus do him very well! How is she?
Edward Oh, she's bonnie. Well, I say bonnie but you know she sold all her hair.
Will Never!
Edward Aye. Had a new babe see. Needed the money.
Will I never knew. What's that? Nipper?
Edward No. Little girl. Little lover, she is.
Will (*sympathetically*) Lovely red hair she had an' all, your missus.
Edward Aye.
Will Aye. If I pass him on to anyone will be to you, Edward.

Edward lifts up the cross

Edward Well, she's done then. Shall we have a go at it?
Will Aye.
Edward With the moves?
Will No, can't do the moves, can we, missing Thomas. No, just the parts.

Geoffrey Le Kolve and Walter approach

Geoffrey How do, lads?

Edward
Will } (*together*) 'Morning Mister.

Walter Will. Edward.

Will No Tom yet.

Walter (*covering up*) He's here. He's with the parson.

Geoffrey (*innocuously*) Have we had bells for five?

Edward We have, sir.

Will (*pointedly*) We've had bells for quarter past five.

Geoffrey Really? Well, the parson hears a confession yet but he'll be along shortly. Walter can get you going. (*Ominously*) There are a change or two this year.

Will We're due breakfast, Mister.

Geoffrey Has that not come neither?

Will No. Neither.

Geoffrey I'll see to it.

Will Please, Mister.

Geoffrey Completely forgot.

Will Mister: we heard speak of more pageant pence wanted.

Geoffrey (*defensively*) I know. These plays is costing the Guilds a fortune. I know, lads. A penny's a lot. *I* can't spare a penny just so. Not like some: sitting on their arses on the dry land while a ship sails making them a fortune. No, I'm opposed to more pageant pence, me. There's talk of sharing our play with the Masons.

Will (*outraged*) Never!

Edward (*outraged*) What!

Geoffrey Oh aye! And I'm the one who's talking! Aye! These pageants is nothing but a pestilence in my opinion. An excuse for time off and clowning about.

Will (*offended*) *Five* morning we rehearse, Mister. And that off our wage.

Geoffrey We has more feast days in this country than work days.

Walter (*conciliatorily*) We should get going lads. There's new words for us all.

Geoffrey No use moaning to me, Will. I've got cakes and ale to dole out. I've got pullers to pay. I've got lights to buy. I've got a mask to leaf in gold. How much is that costing? (*He looks to Walter*)

Edward We all contribute.

Geoffrey To me, see: I'm no reveller ... these days is just Christ done mischief to above the wagon and more mischief done underneath. Half the watchers pissed or sleeping or feeling each other. There's more thought of whoring than of God.

Walter (*shrewdly*) Last year it were reckoned our pageant was finest played.

Geoffrey (*egotistically*) Oh aye. I know that. It were reckoned we were a bull among bullocks!

Will (*cockily*) We were.

Geoffrey I know that. I know that. But we has to save money, Walter. It is as Will says, many things come before a play.

Will (*wounded again*) Never said that! 'Tis our play and we'll not lose it for the sake of a penny.

Geoffrey Then be careful not to lose it for the sake of complaining. (*Sternly*) Now I wants reckoning of savings to take back to the Guild, Walter.

Walter Aye, Mister.

Geoffrey Else these plays is cancelled. That's my mind spoke. So. And bid the priest come see me sharpish. (*He makes to exit*) 'Morning, lads.

All 'Morning, Mister.

Geoffrey exits

Will (*as soon as Geoffrey is out of earshot*) "I can't spare a penny just so!" His bed cost twenty pound!

Edward You shouldn't grumble so, Will. Makes matters worse.

Will Why? Because he threatens us? He can't cut our play. The sky would fall on his head. What would they do, eh? Miss out the crucifixion? Ach!

Walter No, they'd give it to the Merchants.

Will Every year we hear the same story; 'tis to keep our hands tied behind us.

Edward One minute you moan about more money; the next about less.

Will Aye, I do! 'Tis a duty to play the play. And even if God would forgive us the town would not.

Walter An' I tell you, the Merchants would take our pageant and no-one would protest, except us.

Will Except us. US would be sufficient! Don't give us the master's view, Mister Apprentice. We know it.

Edward Leave off, Will.

Will Well.

Edward Thing is, Walter, me and Will and the others . . . Tom . . . we done this pageant years, see. Just the thought of playing her warms cold fingers in January . . . beats the heart come Spring. It's our occasion, in't it?

Walter (*hurt*) I love the play no less than you do.

Edward Course you do.

Will (*knowing this, but still grumpy*) What changes anyway?

Walter They've cut the end business with the purple cloak.

Will And why's that?

Walter Too long. Been complaints to the council about running time. It's reckoned that all forty-eight plays got to be seen within the day, including the Mass.

Edward Not possible.

Walter I know it, Edward, but just the same we cut some. Besides, then we pays less for lights—if we're shorter . . . and if you lose the dividing-up of the cloak that's a purple cloth saved.

Will Ach! Saved! We know what's saved, nipper. 'Tis what's lost is the bugger. These pageant masters would be masters of no pageant at all left up to them. Yet they're never so happy while they can hoof ahead of us, all plush with our banner. Great galleybagging gang.

Edward Don't yoppel on so, Will.

Walter They also want less of the soldiers early on.

Will Do they! What about less Mary?

Walter No. There's less Mary already.

Will (*caustically*) Oh aye! And not because you're groomed for pageant master. We can all clot, Mister. You clot with that lot, please yourself. We'll clot together.

Walter I would do less Mary, Will. I'd do *no* Mary and something else, given the chance. I do have a beard now. (*He feels it*) Some. And I'm betrothed. I long to act in hose and not in petticoat. But I don't choose that neither. I play the Virgin and you play less soldier. There: view the changes.

Will You know I don't know letters. None of us do.

Edward I know some. I know E for Edward and Y for Young and P for Pinner and some others.

Will I'm talking about reading, Edward, and you can't. Nor can any of us saving Mr Walter here.

Walter I'll learn you your parts and we'll do well.

Edward That's kind, Walter.

Walter You making blood yet, Will?

Will I done it a week ago.

Edward Looks marvellous real. You'd think he'd bled himself. And I made new pins.

Walter This year our pageant's having a fresh face for Christ. I'm making him. A quarter ounce of silver in it.

Edward I could eat off that whole winter. Longer.

Will Still. It's the Lord's face. Should be special.

Walter Amen.

Edward Amen.

Walter So. We're starting. You each had five speeches before Christ had his.

Will (*showing all his fingers*) Then ten and I call on company to lift the cross.

Walter No, hold up, Will. Now Thomas speaks once only for Christ and that at the end. So where he spoke first he now says nothing and you continue but lose your speech before he spoke and after. You with me?

Edward So, we says five and then straight away ten and then company?

Walter No, you says four and then nine and then company.

Will (*grumpily*) 'Tis irregular now though, ain't it? 'Cause I used to have one hand's worth beforehand and two hands' worth after.

Edward Always were irregular, 'cause I always used to say four lines then you would say two lines and . . .

Will And different counts. (*Muttering*) It's a bugger if you ask me. 'Tis buggered up for no good reason.

Edward Oh, I think 'tis a nice touch to have the Christ dumb until the end.

Will Edward, you'd thank a bugger for bashing you!

Walter (*delicately*) Do get more complex later, Edward, to tell you the truth.

Edward (*maudlin*) Oh.

Will (*grumpily*) Aye: Bloody oh!

Father Henry Melton, the Chaplain and producer, enters with Thomas

Father Melton Have I missed the breakfast?

Walter No Father, it comes yet.

Father Melton 'Tis a real penance the Lord sent me: hunger. I hunger through the night like no other man I know.

Walter We begun, Father, we're learning changes.

Father Melton Splendid. I've made alterations lads, to improve the speeches. And 'tis also shorter. If a thing is worth talking about for two minutes 'tis better said in one. And in plain words, in English.

Walter I've touched on the differences, Father.

Father Melton Aye. 'Tis the picture speaks, in my view. Not the words. Oh yes. So I'm sad about losing the cloth, me, and the dice. The masters tell me 'tis an expense and not necessary. (*He shrugs*) And Walter, do you still speak for the Virgin? You have increasingly a beard.

Walter I do, Father, but I'll scrape it shortly.

Father Melton Were it to me, I'd have a girl say it, no offence. A girl were chosen for the deed, a girl should say it. The Blessed Mary were a beauty and what we get instead is a dozen youth with small beard and piping voice. Still, the masters would cut the pageant and the Archbishop would stop it altogether. So, Walter, you're preferred to nothing.

Walter Thank you, Father.

Father Melton See, left to me I'd never show Christ wounded. No, I'd take a strapping lad and paint his whole flesh gold, not just the face alone, and have him golden, transcendent on the tree in majesty. So come the great speech, he'd slip the nails and rope and stand arms stretched in blessing, not in pain. (*Acting his fantasy*) "Ah Father, forgive them their cruelty. They know nothing of me. They here have me tree'd. For Adam's sin I now bleed . . ." and so forth. But the taste is for mumbling and hurt and violence and cruelty.

Thomas, of course, couldn't be less appropriate for this vision. He's middle-aged and fat

Edward But surely, Pastor, if we show not Christ's suffering, how can we teach men to sorrow at it and seek forgiveness?

Father Melton Ach. The world is swollen with suffering and sorrow. I've seen enough of it. Still, let's begin and do the moves alone. All the bashing and the bother. Get yourself on the tree now, Tom. I want to show the soldiers the new moves.

Edward How do, Thomas?

Edward helps Thomas to the cross

Thomas (*cautiously*) Oh. Fair.

Edward (*to Will*) Looks a bit wan, don't he, Will?

Will (*mischievously*) 'Tis that new young wife of his: tiring him out. Looks older'n me now.

Thomas I *am* older'n you.

Will Aye, but you never looked it before. This year you do.

Walter comes across to help get Tom on the cross

(*To Walter, wearily*) New moves and all now, is it?

The three men rope Thomas to the cross which is propped up so as to keep Thomas visible. During this

Will I can remember when there were four soldiers, me. Each year they takes something away. Soon they'll have the Christ crucifying hisself and no soldiers at all.

Walter (*having had enough of Will*) You see one bird, it's a flock, ain't it Will?

Will Maybe. What do one spot of rain signal to you? Signal a thousand to me. All this to-do. 'Tis bad token. 'Tis bees out of a hole.

Edward Here come our breakfast, lads.

Father Melton Thank the Lord for that.

Sarah Zachary, Thomas's wife, waiting-woman for the Le Kolves and one-time sweetheart of Walter, enters. She's loaded up with the cakes (bread-cakes) and beer

Father Melton walks towards Sarah

How do, Sarah? Do you bring our beer? Bless you. Jump down then Thomas, and eat.

Sarah How do, lads. Is it hungry work crucifying?

Will 'Tis mistress. Particular we eat an hour after we should.

Sarah (*sweetly, to her husband*) Can I help you, husband?

Thomas (*half-crucified but cheerful*) No. I manage. Do you, with that weight? (*Meaning the jug of beer, etc.*)

Sarah Aye.

Sarah moves across to Walter as the group settles down to breakfast and Thomas disentangles himself from the cross

Sarah Walter.

Walter Sarah.

Sarah And how is it with you, sir?

Walter I'm well, mistress. An' you?

Sarah Aye.

Walter Fair enough.

Sarah We heard you was betrothed then.

Walter Aye.

Sarah Eleanor dell Brigg. That's a good match for you, Walter.

Walter Aye. They say so.

Sarah I'm glad then. And you've got a little beard.

Walter Aye. A little.

Will (*facetiously*) Going to rub off that fluff, make a paint brush, eh Walter?

Sarah (*to Walter*) I has to measure you for your new dress.

Walter (*uncomfortably*) Not drinking, Thomas?

Thomas Will do.

Edward You are queer quiet, Thomas.

Thomas (*mindful of Sarah and Walter*) Ngh.

Edward You sickening?

Thomas No.

Will Done hisself an injury on the planks.
Walter Have some cakes.
Will I heard say at Beverley last year, from John Lunn, that their Christ on the Pinners' pageant got hisself crucified real. Hung him up like a hare they did. He couldn't get his breath. They thought he were pretending but he weren't. Couldn't tell see, under his mask.
Edward Poor nipper.
Will Oh aye, and at Coventry they didn't care much for their boy and thumped in the nails right through his hands.
Thomas Never!
Will Ah! So you *have* still got your tongue.
Thomas They never did!
Will So 'tis said.
Thomas Did they, Parson?
Father Melton Take no notice, Thomas.
Thomas I bet they never.
Walter Come and eat, Thomas.
Sarah Thomas Zachary, you're an old donkey if you listen to this gang. Dip your nose in the jug, lovely, and shut up.

Thomas sulks across

Kathryn Le Kolve appears

(*Jumping up*) Mistress!
Kathryn How do.

The Men jump up

No. Don't stand on ceremony, lads. I needs a word apart with the priest. 'Morning Walter. How goes the rehearsal?
Walter (*wearily*) Very punctuated, madam.
Kathryn How's that?
Walter As yet it has few starts and many stops.
Kathryn Aye well: proceed. Proceed. Can they proceed, Parson?
Father Melton I fear they waits on me, madam.
Kathryn Then come apart, quick. (*She pulls the priest aside*)
Father Melton (*as Kathryn pulls him away*) Point out the changes, Walter.

There are frustrated looks from the actors at a further hiatus. They pack up their breakfast during what follows

Kathryn (*unburdening her news immediately*) Henry, I heard the Earl of Oxford came last night to stop at the Mayor's house.
Father Melton Oxford? Impossible. He's exiled.
Kathryn Not by the King.
Father Melton The King agreed it.
Kathryn He says the King comes here.
Father Melton You emerge too early from your bed, Kathryn.
Kathryn He says the King will be here this morning. And Queen. And retinue.

Father Melton Why?
Kathryn The King is sullen with London, is the word.
Father Melton His Majesty is a man of culture. Why should he come here? No, 'tis idle this rumour. (*Conscious of the others*) Be with you directly, lads.
Kathryn (*undeterred*) And what if the King came to be with the Earl? 'Tis said that when Oxford were at court he could make Richard see black as white and white as black.
Father Melton (*excited*) Would it were true. Would spice the town.
Kathryn I'm off to spice myself.
Father Melton My God, Kathryn. I hope he stop for the pageant and like mine. I'd give my splinter from the true cross for some gold paint and good cloth and even half good players. Oh Christ! He might bring me to court and I could give up scratching about here.
Walter Should we do the moves, Parson?
Father Melton Aye, do the moves.

Bells ring severally and noisily

Thomas
Edward } (*together*) Yow!
Edward What's this!

All react

Will Christ's blood! Them jangle! What's up, then?
Edward Told you, Will. That heron! 'Tis bad luck, I bet! 'Tis a famine!
Walter What bells are these, Parson?
Father Melton What bells? They're all the bells!
Walter Aye, but what do they signify?
Father Melton I don't know, boy.
Kathryn (*delighted*) I think it may be the King coming!
All The King!
Kathryn Aye.
Will (*shouting at the bells*) Why?
Edward Never heard so many bells.
Will All right we heard!

Geoffrey runs in, yelling over the tumult

Geoffrey (*shouting*) The King comes! The King comes!

The bells stop

(*Still shouting*) The King comes!
Kathryn Aye, husband, they know.
Geoffrey How do they know?
Kathryn I told them.
Geoffrey How do you know, madam?
Kathryn (*dissembling*) Oh. (*Meaning, never you mind*)
Geoffrey (*deflated*) Don't just gawp, nippers. There's no rehearsal now.

We're out at the gates to greet the Royal Party. Get to, Walter. The Mayor's craft is half way there.

Kathryn They can't go dressed so.

Geoffrey No. You can't go dressed so. Go and change into Sunday outfit and fetch our banner.

Walter and Will exit

Shift that cross, Thomas, Edward. Don't dawdle! You're all dawdling! Come on, come on! 'Tis a race not a funeral! Let's meet directly by Mickelgate.

Kathryn Sarah, go back to the house and pull out my maroon gown. It needs spicing.

Father Melton (*excited*) I'll hurry, too. I've a sword to buckle on and 'tis a chance to wear my new cross from Venice. I'll see you both at Mickelgate.

Father Melton exits

Geoffrey (*sourly*) That priest is a penance.

Kathryn He's nothing of the sort. He can read. And he forgives me. 'Tis two things *you* can't do. At least.

Geoffrey Ach! And what do this King want now? Christ! 'Tis one trial after another. And how is it, woman, you know the business of the town before I do?

Kathryn I listens, sir. You spend so much time talking. If you want to know, I heard the King is in sulk with London.

Geoffrey How in sulk?

Kathryn For respecting not His Majesty.

Geoffrey Ah! 'Tis a money thing then.

Kathryn Some others say the King love this Oxford more than his wife.

Geoffrey Woman, most men love most men more than their wife.

Kathryn Oh?

Geoffrey Not me. I kiss your finger, madam, and if your foot came more often to my bed I would kiss that also.

Kathryn I hate your bed. It's straw.

Geoffrey Then let me come to yours.

Kathryn With my maid at the foot of it? 'Tis not seemly.

Geoffrey For my part I would throw out the maid.

Kathryn For my part you should throw out the bed, sir, and find a new one more suitable. That's the remedy.

Geoffrey Madam, I spend twenty pounds on your bed because of your horror of the straw one. Now I has the straw one.

Kathryn Aye, husband. That's true.

Geoffrey Well . . . ach, Christ's blood!

Kathryn Where do we greet the King, sir?

Geoffrey By Ouse Bridge.

Kathryn Oh no! Not me. That bridge stinks and I'll not sniff it.

Geoffrey It does not stink.

Kathryn You have no nose, husband, how would you know? If you would buy me parfum I could travel more. I could smell myself and not the foul

air. I will not walk neither. You may be happy to greet a King with skirts beshitted. I am not.

Geoffrey Madam, I am not in charge of the whole town and cannot be blamed for it.

Kathryn But I do not blame you for the whole town but simply for *not* being in charge of it. Run ahead now, and arrange horses and a better view. (*Thinking*) If a King comes, profit comes in his train. Run!

Geoffrey huffs

But not sweatily, sir!

Geoffrey Ach.

Geoffrey exits unhappily. Then Kathryn exits, happily

Scene 2

The Mayor's house

This is the bedroom or upper storey. There is a shuttered space rather than a window

In the room Richard II, his Queen, Anne of Bohemia, and the exiled Earl, Robert de Vere of Oxford, are reunited. Richard is embracing Oxford

Richard Robert!

Oxford Richard! Anne! Marvellous.

Anne (*concerned*) Robert, you're grey.

Oxford (*shrugging*) Dust. (*Concerned*) You're thin.

Anne (*tightly*) I don't think so.

Richard When did you come? Yesterday?

Oxford Aye. Last evening.

Anne Let's not go down. Let's stay up here and talk.

Richard There's a feast done for us.

Anne (*mischievously*) Say I sicken.

Oxford Oh do, please, Majesty. The people here will speak French and cannot. I want to speak English. I would not care if I never heard a *bonjour* or a *bonsoir* before purgatory. Tell me of London.

Richard No.

Anne He hates London now, Robert. Without you. Without friends. Without money.

Oxford Is it bad?

Richard Worse. The city vomits merchants and lawyers. The court conspires. Gloucester and Bolingbroke torment me. London's piss drowns me.

Anne (*sadly*) I cannot conceive there, Robert. I lost two babies since we last spoke.

Richard The Parliament would speak my words for me, move my hands like so. (*He demonstrates a puppet*) They call me weak because I love not warmongering and the endless bloodying.

Oxford And because you once loved Oxford.

Richard Still do, friend.

Oxford Oh, London still sounds like heaven after Calais and Bordeaux and those puddles of nowhere, Sire. Not a sun but I thought of you, not a laugh but I heard yours, not a game but I saw you play it, not a pageant but I remembered your hurrah.

Richard No laughs now, Robert, nor games. London is loveless.

Oxford Then it is you who is London in my heart and now London is in York with Oxford.

Anne And Bohemia.

Oxford And Bohemia!

Richard I kicked out the Mayor at home, Robert, and his crew, and they can linger on my pleasure.

Oxford Bravo.

Richard It were never meant for tradesmen to govern. It is against God that a King should be worked from below.

Oxford But what do you hope for here?

Anne Rest.

Richard Give them a few weeks, the fat cats will purr for me again. Meanwhile, we three can live a little out of time.

Anne We might move the court here if it pleases us.

Oxford I only fear that this place is more of the same. The Mayor here is so full of Mayor he cannot squeeze into his gown an inch of wit.

Richard He bowed and scraped an hour outside the gates until I fell asleep on his speech. We waded here, Robert. Half the town oozing on us.

Oxford And the Mayoress is inflated. Like a pig's bladder for football. She knows nothing but insists on revealing it.

Anne This is a fine bed.

Richard Anne judges each new place by its bed.

Anne I do. This bed is a better bed than ours, Richard.

Oxford Ask them for it. They can't refuse.

Richard I might.

Oxford It will flatter them you want their beds. Each will out-peacock the other until they realize that to show off so they must lose what they most prize: the thing. 'Tis a people of thing, these guildsmen.

Anne What "thing"?

Oxford A "thing". Any "thing". Beds, bolsters, pisspots, conduits, baubs, trinkets, hangings ... anything. What breeding they lack inside they disguise in this weight of thing. They even die now and have these things buried with them.

Richard You've not changed, Robert.

Oxford Demand these things. That what they own is coveted is essential to their design ... that a King wants them is marvellous. They'll bestow them on you flushed with conceit and next flushed with anxiety. They know the worth of each thing down to the last farthing and will cost out their generosity tear by tear.

Richard This polemic cost you your land, your fortune and London's favour.

Oxford Good riddance then, eh?
Anne And you have one rule for your friends and another for the world.
Oxford Who has not? I hate the pig with power, the donkey with degree. I hate books unread and songs unheard and glass unviewed and all beauty wasted. And I talk too much.
Anne You do, and I love it.
Richard And I do.
Anne I'll have the bed. The colour suits me. I think I'll lie down on it, too. Come boys and cosset me.
Richard Do you know this woman has been sick, Oxford?
Oxford How sick?
Richard She swoons on me and fevers on me and coughs and chokes and spasms on me. No thought of my peace. (*Gently*) Is that not so, madam?
Anne I'm inconsiderate.
Richard January she even feigned death to grieve me. (*He clasps Anne's hand*)
Oxford (*clasping Anne's other hand*) Hussy.
Anne I know.
Richard And dead babes she hands me, just so.
Oxford Wicked.
Anne 'Tis too many eyes on me, Robert, none friendly.
Oxford Then we will make of this a season of sport to cure us all.
Richard Amen.
Anne To mischief!
Oxford To mischief!
Richard To mischief!
Oxford (*only half believing what he says*) And surely come the autumn: London, starved of majesty, will embrace you.
Anne And we can bring you back in our train.
Oxford I like this scheme.
Richard Robert, what of the play here? How is it?
Oxford Good, I hear.
Richard If it rivals Coventry 'tis the one thing the country does to out-art London.
Anne Richard, show him your wipe.
Oxford What's this?
Richard My wipe!
Oxford I'm lost.

Richard produces a large handkerchief and blows his nose

Ha!

Richard hands it to Anne who blows hers

Richard Robert . . .

Robert blows his nose. He laughs

It saves the sleeve, eh?

They grin hugely

Oxford Whose invention is this?
Anne Richard's.
Oxford 'Tis very strange.
Richard How strange! 'Tis very wondrous! I have many and use them variously: one for the nose; one for the arse; one for the brow.
Anne An' he mix them up.
Oxford True. 'Tis very wondrous.
Richard Here, (*he fishes around and produces half a dozen handkerchiefs*) try them.
Anne The Parliament call him woman for this hygiene.
Oxford I call them shit flies for theirs!
Richard To women then!
Oxford And away with shit flies.
Anne Away with them!

Scene 3

The Mayor's house. A room below

The Mayor and Mayoress wait to eat and wonder how you tell a King he's late for dinner

Alice What transpires up there, husband?
William I don't know.
Alice They won't have servants in with them. That's unnatural.
William How unnatural?
Alice Well, 'tis not done, is it?
William What the King do becomes what's done, madam.
Alice True. *Je ne sais pas.* The Earl of Oxford is exceeding strange, though.
William Aye.

Alice whispers confidential rumours about Oxford's exploits

Why whisper, wife, when we're alone?
Alice Such things should not be shouted. (*She whispers some more*)
William Well, I don't know, do I? They come from London and have different customs.
Alice Should we learn them, then?
William An' they're Kings! (*Thinking*) I don't know. What I do know is I'm hungered and my belly rumbles and churns and can sniff the table.
Alice We can't eat until they come down. The Queen has bathed herself. And the King. Is that the fashion too? To come in from outdoors and wash the body?
William I don't know.
Alice I'm certain the physic would say it risks sickness ... but if it be the fashion we should do it, husband, and encourage the town.
William Woman, I am already the laughing stock with all this hygiene law you make me champion.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
or, in the US www.samuelfrench.com

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and enjoy other theatre-related larks, do follow us on our spangley social media channels.



Samuel French London



SamuelFrenchLtd

SF **PERUSALS**