

*King Richard the Third*

...had given promise of fair weather; but the morning sky  
...and sunless. Many an uneasy glance was cast upward; but  
...in armour and mounted up on Surrey, his beloved horse, was  
...spirits. To be among steel and soldiers revived him wonder-  
...The sun will not be seen today!" said he to Ratcliffe. "Why,  
...is that to me more than to Richmond? For the self-same heaven  
...owns on me looks sadly upon him!"

Norfolk came riding up with news that the enemy had begun to  
...At once, Richard was all energy, all action: "Come, bustle,  
...! Call up Lord Stanley; bid him bring his power! March on! Join  
...! Let us to it pell-mell—if not to Heaven, then hand in hand to

With a wave of his mailed hand, he galloped off to the hillside, where  
...forces were drawn up in line of battle. Up and down the ranks he  
...stirring his soldiers into warlike fury. "Let's whip these stragglers  
...the seas again," he shouted, "these famished beggars weary of  
...their lives! Fight, gentlemen of England! Fight, bold yeomen! Draw,  
...archers, draw your arrows to the head! Spur your proud horses hard,  
...and ride in blood!"

A horseman approached. Norfolk was back. "What says Lord Stan-  
...y?" demanded Richard. "Will he bring his power?"

But even as he asked, he knew the answer. Norfolk's face was pale,  
...his looks were grim. Stanley had deserted and gone over to the enemy!  
..."Off with his son George's head!" screamed Richard, mad with rage.  
...But even this satisfaction was denied him. "My lord," warned Norfolk,  
..."the enemy is past the marsh! After the battle let George Stanley die."

Richard stared at him. He grew cold. For a moment, it was no longer  
...Norfolk there beside him. It was Buckingham, smiling and nodding  
...his sleek, smooth, chopped-off head. "Despair and die!"

The King's forces met the rapidly advancing enemy on the lower slopes  
...of the hill; and in an instant the morning was hideous with screams  
...and shouts and raging steel, as a surging torrent of swords and axes  
...set about hacking off arms and legs and heads, and scattering brains  
...like bloody flowers in the trampled grass.

For a while, the contest seemed equal: the tide of conflict flowed to

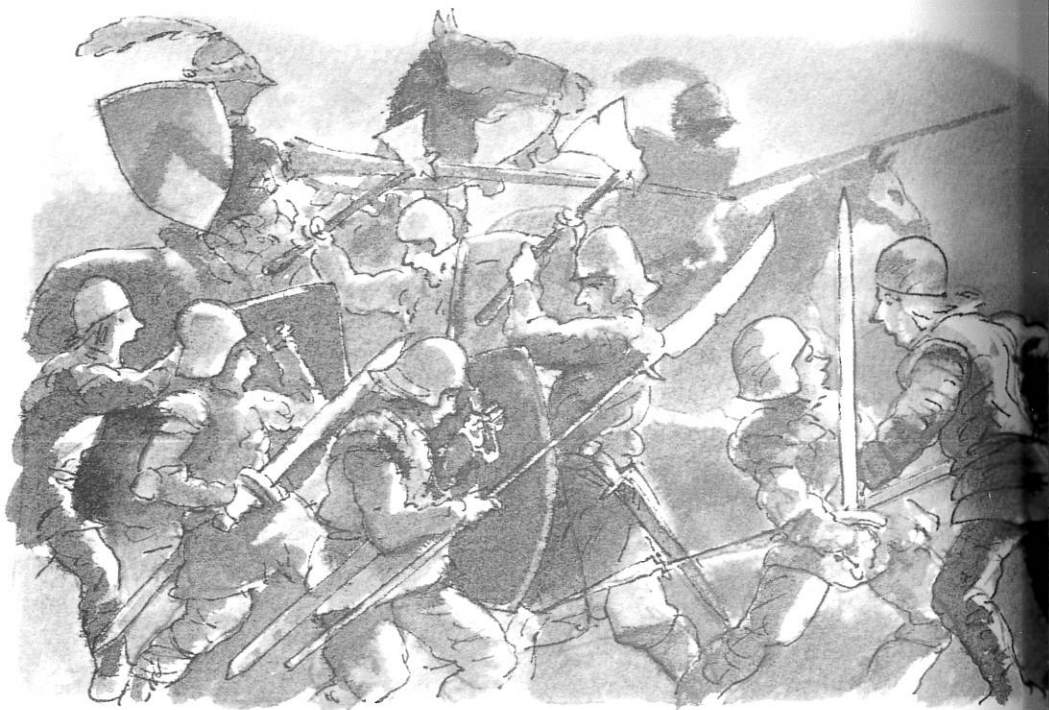
and fro, with neither side gaining an advantage. Then Lord Stanley, with all his great power, struck at the flank of the King's army, and split it into a thousand warring fragments, of dying horses and leaderless men! The battle was won, and lost—

“A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!”

The hunchback was fighting for his life. His horse had been slain beneath him; but he fought on like a madman. Hopping and staggering in his heavy armour, he killed and killed and killed. He was searching for Richmond—

“Withdraw, my lord!” pleaded Catesby, desperate to save his master; but the hunchback was past all hearing, past all reason!

“Slave!” he shouted wildly, “I have set my life upon a cast, and I will stand the hazard of the die! I think there be six Richmonds in the field: five have I slain today instead of him!” and, thrusting Catesby aside, he stumbled rapidly away, like a huge iron insect, blindly seeking



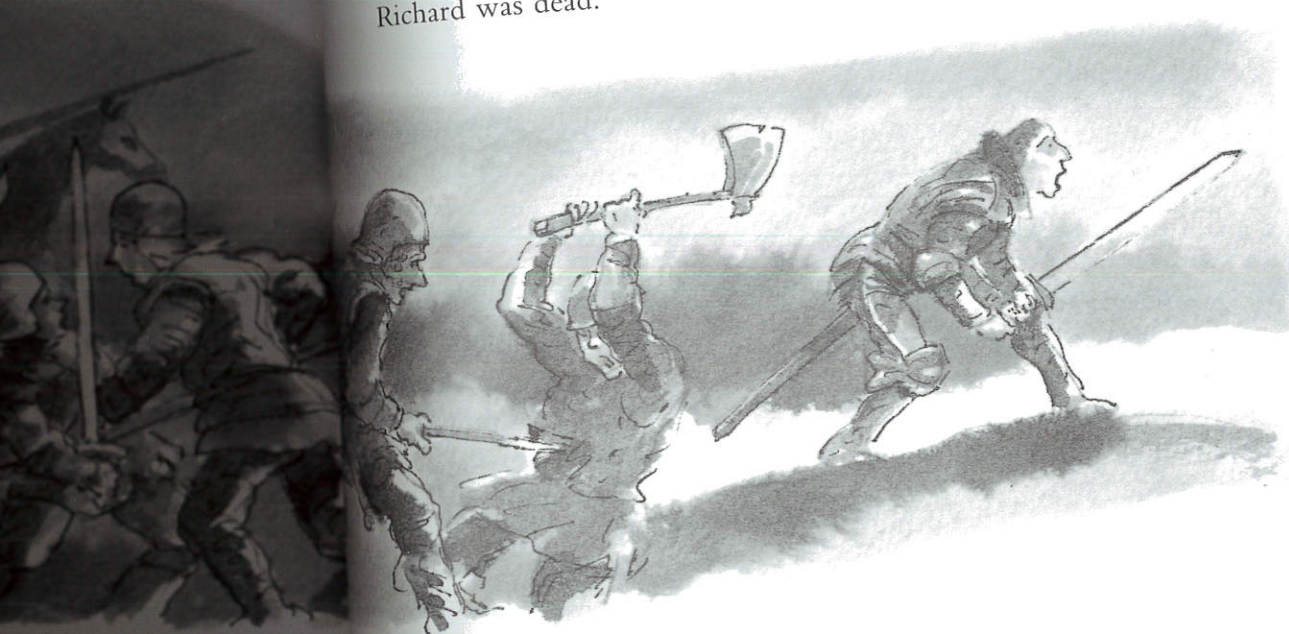
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more Richmonds to kill. The last Catesby saw of him was as he vanished into the dark storm of war, madly shouting, "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

Another Richmond! Thin, milky, awkward fellow, more like a cautious girl than a prince of war! With a savage grunt, the hunchback lifted up his dripping sword— He cried out in rage and bewilderment. Richmond was no longer there. Suddenly, the whirling air was full of whispers: "Despair and die . . . despair and die . . ."

Grim and dreadful shapes were advancing upon him: the old king and his son, bleeding from their wounds, murdered Clarence, Hastings and sleek Buckingham . . . even the two dead children and the gaunt, suffocating Anne! Wildly, he tried to strike at them, to kill them again! But he could scarcely move! The heaviness had returned: his limbs were like lead. "Despair and die!" whispered the ghosts. "Despair and die!"

With a single blow, Richmond struck him to the ground; and his blood and brains rushed out of his splintered head. His mother's prophecy had been fulfilled: "Bloody thou art; bloody will be thy end." Richard was dead.



It was evening. Cautiously, the inhabitants of the village of Bosworth came out of their cottages and began to wander over the deserted battlefield. So it was all over, and there would be a new King: Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, of the House of Lancaster. It was said he was to marry the Lady Elizabeth of York, and so bury for ever the bloody rivalry of their Houses in a marriage bed. At last, there would be peace. The villagers sighed with relief, and began to gather up the spent arrows and broken lances, for staking out next year's peas and beans.