

are. I'm lucky. I'm gifted. I have a talent for surrender. I'm at peace. But you are cursed; and I like you so it makes me sad, you don't have the gift; and I see the torture of it. All I can do is worry for you. But I will not worry for myself, you cannot convince me that I am one of the Bad Guys. I get up, I go, I lie a little, I peddle a little, I watch the rules, I talk the talk. We fellows have those offices high up there so we can catch the wind and go with it, however it blows. But, and I will not apologize for it, I take pride; I am the best possible Arnold Burns. *Pause* Well—give my regards to Irving R. Feldman, will ya? *Starts to leave.*

MURRAY, *going toward him*: Arnold—

ARNOLD: Please, Murray— (*puts his hand up*) Allow me once to leave a room before you do. *Arnold snaps on record player as he walks past it to the front door; exits.*

## BECKET (or THE HONOUR OF GOD)

by Jean Anouilh,  
translated by Lucienne Hill

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### ACT IV

The play tells the story of Henry II, King of England, and Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, of the conflicting allegiances that destroy their friendship and that ultimately lead to Becket's assassination by the king.

Henry is a Norman (the people that conquered the native British Saxons). He is crude and untutored with simple goals and passions. He loves Becket, his friend and advisor, and he is determined to win his struggle with the Church for wealth and power. Becket, a Saxon, is wiser, subtler, and more complex. He is devoted to his king who has enriched and protected him (he was Henry's faithful companion in drinking, fighting, and whoring); yet through the years of their friendship his alle-

giance was always tempered by the knowledge that his own conquered people were suffering under Henry's rule.

When his enemy, the old archbishop, dies Henry comes up with a most clever plan. He will appoint his friend Becket to the post, thus bringing the Church and the Saxons fully under his control. But Becket takes his church responsibilities far more seriously than anticipated; most seriously, indeed. For the first time in his life his direction is clear. On the Church's behalf he opposes Henry on a number of crucial issues, and his intelligence and incorruptibility thwart Henry's every strategy.

Feeling betrayed, Henry plots against Becket's life. Becket leaves England seeking the protection of the French king; but soon—realizing the unreliability of that protection and the need to fight his battles on England's soil—he decides to return home. In the scene that follows, Henry and Becket are alone on an open plain in France, battered by wintry winds. They have agreed to meet to try to reconcile their differences—but neither can budge from his position.

KING, *suddenly*: If we've nothing more to say to each other, we might as well go and get warm!

BECKET: We have everything to say to each other, my prince. The opportunity may not occur again.

KING: Make haste, then. Or there'll be two frozen statues on this plain making their peace in a frozen eternity! I am your King, Becket! And so long as we are on this earth you owe me the first move! I'm prepared to forget a lot of things but not the fact that I am King. You yourself taught me that.

BECKET, *gravely*: Never forget it, my prince. Even against God. You have a different task to do. You have to steer the ship.

KING: And you—what do you have to do?

BECKET: Resist you with all my might, when you steer against the wind.

KING: Do you expect the wind to be behind me, Becket? No such luck! That's the fairy-tale navigation! God on the King's side? That's never happened yet! Yes, once in a century, at the time of the Crusades, when all Christendom shouts "It's God's will!" And even then! You know as well as I do what private greeds a Crusade covers up, in nine cases out of ten. The rest of

the time, it's a head-on wind. And there must be somebody to keep the watch!

**BECKET:** And somebody else to cope with the absurd wind—and with God. The tasks have been shared out, once and for all. The pity of it is that it should have been between us two, my prince—who were friends.

**KING, crossly:** The King of France—I still don't know what he hopes to gain by it—preached at me for three whole days for me to make my peace with you. What good would it do you to provoke me beyond endurance?

**BECKET:** None.

**KING:** You know that I am the King, and that I must act like a King! What do you expect of me? Are you hoping I'll weaken?

**BECKET:** No. That would prostrate me.

**KING:** Do you hope to conquer me by force then?

**BECKET:** You are the strong one.

**KING:** To win me round?

**BECKET:** No. Not that either. It is not for me to win you round. I have only to say no to you.

**KING:** But you must be logical, Becket!

**BECKET:** No. That isn't necessary, my Liege. We must only do—absurdly—what we have been given to do—right to the end.

**KING:** Yet I know you well enough, God knows. Ten years we spent together, little Saxon! At the hunt, at the whorehouse, at war; carousing all night long the two of us; in the same girl's bed, sometimes . . . and at work in the Council Chamber too. Absurdly. That word isn't like you.

**BECKET:** Perhaps. I am no longer like myself.

**KING, derisively:** Have you been touched by grace?

**BECKET, gravely:** Not by the one you think. I am not worthy of it.

**KING:** Did you feel the Saxon in you coming out, despite Papa's good collaborator's sentiments?

**BECKET:** No. Not that either.

**KING:** What then?

**BECKET:** I felt for the first time that I was being entrusted with something, that's all—there in that empty cathedral, somewhere in France, that day when you ordered me to take up this burden. I was a man without honor. And suddenly I found it—one I never imagined would ever become mine—the honor of

God. A frail, incomprehensible honor, vulnerable as a boy-King fleeing from danger.

**KING, roughly:** Suppose we talked a little more precisely, Becket, with words I understand? Otherwise we'll be here all night. I'm cold. And the others are waiting for us on the fringes of this plain.

**BECKET:** I am being precise.

**KING:** I'm an idiot then! Talk to me like an idiot! That's an order. Will you lift the excommunication which you pronounced on William of Aynsford and others of my liegemen?

**BECKET:** No, Sire, because that is the only weapon I have to defend this child, who was given, naked, into my care.

**KING:** Will you agree to the twelve proposals which my Bishops have accepted in your absence at Northampton, and notably to forego the much-abused protection of Saxon clerics who get themselves tonsured to escape land bondage?

**BECKET:** No, Sire. My role is to defend my sheep. And they are my sheep. *A pause.* Nor will I concede that the Bishops should forego the right to appoint priests in their own dioceses, nor that churchmen should be subject to any but the Church's jurisdiction. These are my duties as a pastor—which it is not for me to relinquish. But I shall agree to the nine other articles in a spirit of peace, and because I know that you must remain King—in all save the honor of God.

**KING, after a pause, coldly:** Very well. I will help you defend your God, since that is your new vocation, in memory of the companion you once were to me—in all save the honor of the Realm. You may come back to England, Thomas.

**BECKET:** Thank you, my prince. I meant to go back in any case and give myself up to your power, for on this earth, you are my King. And in all that concerns this earth, I owe you obedience.

**KING, after a pause, ill at ease:** Well, let's go back now. We've finished. I'm cold.

**BECKET, dully:** I feel cold too, now. *Another pause. They look at each other. The wind howls.*

**KING, suddenly:** You never loved me, did you, Becket?

**BECKET:** In so far as I was capable of love, yes, my prince, I did.

**KING:** Did you start to love God? *He cries out:* You mule! Can't you ever answer a simple question?

**BECKET**, *quietly*: I started to love the honor of God.

**KING**, *somberly*: Come back to England. I give you my royal peace. May you find yours. And may you not discover you were wrong about yourself. This is the last time I shall come begging to you. *He cries out*: I should never have seen you again! It hurts too much. *His whole body is suddenly shaken by a sob.*

**BECKET**, *goes nearer to him; moved*: My prince—

**KING**, *yelling*: No! No pity! It's dirty. Stand away from me! Go back to England! It's too cold out here! *Becket turns his horse and moves nearer to the King.*

**BECKET**, *gravely*: Farewell, my prince. Will you give me the kiss of peace?

**KING**: No! I can't bear to come near you! I can't bear to look at you! Later! Later! When it doesn't hurt any more!

**BECKET**: I shall set sail tomorrow. Farewell, my prince. I know I shall never see you again.

**KING**, *his face twisted with hatred*: How dare you say that to me after I gave you my royal word? Do you take me for a traitor?

*Becket looks at him gravely for a second longer, with a sort of pity in his eyes. Then he slowly turns his horse and rides away. The wind howls.*

**KING**: Thomas!

## STREAMERS

by David Rabe

### ACT II

The setting of the play is a stateside army training barracks during the early years of the Vietnam War. But this play is not about the violent clashing of nations. Its bloody and deadly violence erupts from simple misunderstandings between individual men, from frustrations and mistrust and misguided pride. Billy,

Roger, and Richie are three young soldiers sharing a bunk room. Billy is a clean-cut country boy, afraid of being shipped to a war zone. Roger is a black man who has found a home in the army. Richie is urbane and witty—and a homosexual. He is totally out of place in this military environment. Their interactions are amiable and their arguments restrained.

Enter Carlyle—a street-hardened black draftee with intense passions, hatreds, and fears. Ultimately Carlyle, who is not drawn as an unsympathetic character, launches a siege of violence that leaves Billy and an army sergeant dead.

Just before the following excerpt, Carlyle has come into the room and found Richie alone, reading in bed. There is some conversation about a previous evening when Carlyle came in drunk and filled with self-pity, muttering on about his fears as he fell asleep on the floor. Richie gets up, closes the door to the room, offers Carlyle a cigarette, and crosses back to the bed.

**CARLYLE**: You know what I bet. I been lookin' at you real close. It just a way I got about me. And I bet if I was to hang my boy out in front of you, my big boy, man, you'd start wantin' to touch him. Be beggin' and talkin' sweet to ole Carlyle. Am I right or wrong? *He leans over Richie.* What do you say?

**RICHIE**: Pardon?

**CARLYLE**: You heard me. Ohhh, I am so restless, I don't even understand it. My big black boy is what I was talkin' about. My thing, man; my rope, Jim. **HEY RICHIE!** *And he lunges, then moves his fingers through Richie's hair.* How long you been a punk? Can you hear me? Am I clear? Do I talk funny? *He is leaning close.* Can you smell the gin on my mouth?

**RICHIE**: I mean, if you really came looking for Roger, he and Billy are gone to the gymnasium. They were—

**CARLYLE**: No. *He slides down on the bed, his arm placed over Richie's legs.* I got no athletic abilities. I got none. No moves. I don't know. **HEY RICHIE!** *Leaning close again:* I just got this question I asked, I got no answer.

**RICHIE**: I don't know . . . what . . . you mean.

**CARLYLE**: I heard me. I understand me. "How long you been a punk?" is the question I asked—have you got a reply?

**RICHIE**, *confused, irritated, but fascinated*: Not to that question.