

Becker Or the Honor of God

12th century England. Thomas Becket is King Henry's good friend, and the Archbishop. Becket becomes a devout clergyman, and starts to attack the division between church and state, which Henry wants to avoid.

King:
You look older Thomas.

Becket:
You too highness. Are you sure you aren't too cold?

K: I'm frozen stiff. You love it of course! You're in your natural element, and you're barefooted as well.

B: (Smiling) That's my latest affection.

K: Even with these fur boots my chilblains are killing me. Aren't yours? Or don't you have any?

B: (gently) Of course.

K: (with a sudden cry) If we start straightaway we are sure to quarrel! Let's talk about trivial things. You know my son is fourteen? He's come of age.

B: Has he improved at all?

K:
He's a little idiot, and sly like his mother. Becker, don't you ever marry.

B: (Smiling) The matter is taken out of my hands. By you, highness! It was you who had me ordained!

K: (With a cry)
Let's not start yet. I tell you, talk about something else!

B: (Lightly)
Has your highness done much hunting lately?

K: (Snarling)
Yes, everyday! And it doesn't amuse me much anymore.

B: Have you any new hawks?

K: (Furiously)
The most expensive on the market, but they don't fly straight.

B: And your horses?

K: The sultan sent me four superb stallions for the tenth anniversary of my reign, but they throw everyone! Nobody has managed to mount one of them, yet!

B: (Smiling) I must see what I can do about that somday.

K: They'll throw you too! And we'll see your buttocks under your robe! Atleast, I hope so, or everything would be too dismal.

B: (After a pause)
Do you know what I miss most sire? The horses.

K: And the women.

B: (Simply) I've forgotten.

King: You hypocrite. You turned into a hypocrite when you became a priest. (Abruptly) Did you love Gwendolen?

B: I've forgotten her too.

K: You did love her! That;s the only way I can account for it.

B: (Gravely) No, my prince, in my soul and conscience I did no love her.

K: Then you never loved anything, that;s worse! (Churlishy) Why are you calling me your prince like in the old days.

B: (Gently)
Because you have remained my prince.

K: (Crying out) Then why are you doing me harm?

B: Lets talk about something else.

K: Well what? I'm cold.

B: I told you my prince, one must fight cold with cold's own weapons. Strip naked and pash yourself with cold water every morning.

K: I used to when you were there to force me into it, I never wash now, I stink, I grew a beard at one time, did you know?

B: (Smiling) Yes, I had a hearty laugh over it.

K: I cut it off because it itched. (He cries out suddenly like a lost child) Becker, I'm bored.

B: (Gravely) My prince, I do so wish I could help you.

K: Then what are you waiting for? Can't you see I'm dying for it?

B: Queitly) I;m waiting for the honor of god and the honor of the king to become one.

K: You'll wait a long time then.

B: Yes, I'm afraid I will.

Pause, only the wind is heard

K: (Suddenly) If we've nothing more to say to each other, we might as well go and get warm!

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

K: Then make haste. Or there;kk be twi frizen statues on this plain making their pece in a frozen eternity. I am your King, becket! And so long as we are on this earth you own me the first move! I'm prepared to forget a lot of things, but not the fact that I am King. You taught me that.

B: (gravely) Never forget it my prince. Even gainst god. You have a different tak to do, you have to steer the ship.

K: And you, what do you have to do.

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

K: Do you expect the wind to be behind me Becket? No such luck. That's a fairy tale navigation. God on the Kings side? That;s never happened yet. Yes one time in a century, it happened during the crusades, when all Christendom shouts "It's god's will!" And even then! You know as well as I do what pr5vate greed a Crusade covers up. In nine cases out of ten! The rest of the time its a head on wind. There must be somebody to keep the watch.

B: And somebody else to cope with the absurd wind I—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.

K: The king of france, I still don;t know what he hopes to gain by it o- 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?

B: None.

K: You know that I am king, and that I must act like a king. What do you expect of me, are you hoping I will weaken?

B: No, that would prostrate me.

K: Do you hope to conquer me by force then?

B:you are a strong one.

K: To win me round?

B: No, not that either. It is not for me to win round. I have only to say no to you.

K: But you must be logical Becket!

B: No, that isn't necessary my liege. Must only do absurdly, what we have been given to do, right to the end.

K: 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 girls bed sometimes.... and at work in the council chamber too. Absurdly, that word isn't like you.

B: Perhaps. I am no longer like myself.

K: Have you been touched by grace?

B: Not the one you think. I am not worthy of it.

K: Did you feel Saxon in you coming out? Despite papas good collaborators sentiments.

B: No not that either.

K: What then?

B: I felt for the first time that I was being entrusted with something. Thats 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 honour of god. A frail, incomprehensible honor, vulnerable as a boy-king fleeing from danger.

K: 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.

B: I am being precise.

K: 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 the others of my Liegement.

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

K: 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?

B: No sire, my role is to defend my sheep. And they are my sheep. 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.

K: (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.

B: Thankyou, 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 ow you obedience.

K: Well, lets go back now, we've finished, and I'm cold.

B: I feel cold now too.

KL You never loved me, did you becket?

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

K: Did you start to love god? You mule, can't you ever answer a simple question.

B: I started to love the honor of god.

K: 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 shal come begging to you. I should never have seen you again, it hurts too much!

B: My prince---

K: NO! No pity! Its dirty. Stand away from me. Go back to England. Its too cold out here.

B: Farwell my prince. Will you give me the kiss of peace?

K: NO! I can;t bear to come near you. I an't bear to look at you! Later! Later! When it doesn't hurt any,more!

B: I shall set sail tomorrow. I may never see you again.

K: (his face twisted in 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 slowly turns and exits.)

K: Thomas!