

**SOMEDAY YOUR FOOL WILL COME**  
**An Introduction to *King Lear* Edited for Middle School**  
**by**  
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Editing Shakespeare makes people nervous, particularly English teachers. We feel unworthy of marring the sacred text. The idea that we, teachers, may choose what words our students do or do not read is a difficult task. Sadly, choosing not to edit a text may limit which plays our younger students are able to read and perform. Time does not allow my seventh grade students to tackle an unabridged *Lear*. In my desire to stray from the standard middle school texts (i.e. *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*), I offer an edited version that I hope will allow students and teachers to explore *Lear* undaunted. It is debatable whether I have the authority to reinterpret this text, but in doing so, I maintain the best possible intentions: to continue to instill a love of language in my middle school students.

Glosses were made based on the types of words that often confuse my students. I review the use of “thou” and “thee”, as well as early modern verb forms before tackling a play, so those types of words are not glossed. Neither are words I feel students could easily reference or understand in context. I also try to clarify scene locations and basic character relationships in my notes.

This version entirely omits the character of the Fool, a choice I made after a great deal of agony. The Fool’s lines, so often made of puns and clever wordplay, require more explanation than I can offer to my students. If this abridged version can be seen as only an initial exposure to this great text, one that leads to more detailed work later, then students will meet their Fool when the time is right.

Much thanks to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* website at <http://shakespeare.mit.edu> for the text. I also credit The Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *King Lear* edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine for help with my notes.



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*King Lear*  
Edited for middle school

**ACT 1****SCENE 1: King Lear's palace.**

*Enter KENT, an Earl and friend to King Lear, the Duke of GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND, Gloucester's son out of wedlock.*

**KENT**

I thought the king had more affected<sup>1</sup> the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

**GLOUCESTER**

It did always seem so to us: but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most.

**KENT**

Is not this your son, my lord?

**GLOUCESTER**

His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it<sup>2</sup>. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

**EDMUND**

No, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

My lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honorable friend.

**EDMUND**

My services to your lordship.

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is coming.

*Enter KING LEAR, The Duke of CORNWALL, The Duke of ALBANY, GONERIL (King Lear's oldest daughter and wife of CORNWALL), REGAN (King Lear's middle daughter and wife of ALBANY), CORDELIA (King Lear's youngest daughter), and Attendants*

**KING LEAR**

Attend<sup>3</sup> the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

**GLOUCESTER**

I shall, my lord.

*Exeunt<sup>4</sup> GLOUCESTER and EDMUND*

<sup>1</sup> More affected: liked

<sup>2</sup> Brazed to it: used to it

<sup>3</sup> Attend: Bring in

<sup>4</sup> Exeunt: more than one character leaves the stage.



**KING LEAR**

Meantime we<sup>5</sup> shall express our darker purpose.  
 Give me the map there. Know that we have divided  
 In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent  
 To shake all cares and business from our age;  
 Conferring them on younger strengths, while we  
 Unburdened crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,  
 And you, our no less loving son of Albany,  
 We have this hour a constant will to publish  
 Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
 May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,  
 Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
 Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
 And here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters,--  
 Which of you shall we say doth love us most?  
 Goneril, our eldest-born, speak first.

**GONERIL**

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;  
 Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;  
 Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;  
 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;  
 As much as child ever loved, or father found;  
 A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;  
 Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

**CORDELIA**

[Aside] What shall Cordelia do?  
 Love, and be silent.

**LEAR**

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,  
 With shadowy forests and with champains riched<sup>6</sup>,  
 With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads<sup>7</sup>,  
 We make thee lady. What says our second daughter,  
 Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

**REGAN**

I am made of the self-same metal as my sister,  
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
 I find she names my very deed of love;  
 Only she comes too short: that I profess  
 Myself an enemy to all other joys,  
 Which the most precious square of sense possesses;

<sup>5</sup> The King refers to himself with the royal "we"

<sup>6</sup> Champains rich: rich plains

<sup>7</sup> Wide-skirted meads: broad meadows



And find I am alone felicitate<sup>8</sup>  
In your dear highness' love.

**CORDELIA**

[Aside] Then poor Cordelia!  
And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's  
More rich than my tongue.

**KING LEAR**

To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,  
Than that conferred on Goneril. Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least; to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interested<sup>9</sup>; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

**CORDELIA**

Nothing, my lord.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing!

**CORDELIA**

Nothing.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

**CORDELIA**

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty  
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

**KING LEAR**

How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little,  
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

**CORDELIA**

Good my lord,  
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I  
Return those duties back as are right fit,  
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.  
Why have my sisters' husbands, if they say  
They love you all?  
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters.

**KING LEAR**

But goes thy heart with this?

**CORDELIA**

Ay, good my lord.

**KING LEAR**

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<sup>8</sup> Felicitate: made happy

<sup>9</sup> Strive to be intressed: want to be married



So young, and so untender?

**CORDELIA**

So young, my lord, and true.

**KING LEAR**

Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower<sup>10</sup>:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,

Propinquity and property of blood<sup>11</sup>,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee, from this, for ever.

**KENT**

Good my liege,--

**KING LEAR**

Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

I loved her most, and thought to set my rest

On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!

Cornwall and Albany,

With my two daughters' dowers digest this third<sup>12</sup>:

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.

I do invest you jointly with my power.

Ourselves, by monthly course,

With reservation of an hundred knights<sup>13</sup>,

By you to be sustained, shall our abode

Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain

The name, and all the additions<sup>14</sup> to a king;

The sway, revenue, execution of the rest<sup>15</sup>,

Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm,

This coronet part betwixt you.

*Gives up the crown*

**KENT**

Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honored as my king,

Loved as my father, as my master followed,

As my great patron thought on in my prayers,--

**KING LEAR**

The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft.<sup>16</sup>

**KENT**

<sup>10</sup> Dower: the money or property the wife brings to the husband

<sup>11</sup> Propinquity and property of blood: closeness to his daughter

<sup>12</sup> Digest this third: divide up Cordelia's third

<sup>13</sup> Reservation of an hundred knights: keeping a hundred knights for my own use

<sup>14</sup> Additions: titles

<sup>15</sup> The sway, revenue and execution of the rest: everything else associate with being king

<sup>16</sup> The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft: I've made my decision; get out of the way



Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
 The region of my heart. What wilt thou do, old man?  
 Reverse thy doom;  
 And, in thy best consideration, check  
 This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,  
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least.

**KING LEAR**

Kent, on thy life, no more.

**KENT**

My life I never held but as a pawn  
 To wage against thy enemies; nor fear to lose it,  
 Thy safety being the motive.

**KING LEAR**

O, vassal! miscreant<sup>17</sup>!

*Laying his hand on his sword*

**ALBANY and CORNWALL**

Dear sir, forbear<sup>18</sup>.

**KENT**

Revoke thy doom;  
 Or, whilst I can vent clamor from my throat,  
 I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

**KING LEAR**

Hear me, recreant!  
 On thine allegiance, hear me!  
 Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,  
 Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride  
 To come between our sentence and our power,  
 Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,  
 Our potency made good, take thy reward.  
 Five days we do allot thee, for provision  
 To shield thee from diseases of the world;  
 And on the sixth to turn thy hated back  
 Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following,  
 Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions,  
 The moment is thy death. Away!

**KENT**

Fare thee well, king: since thus thou wilt appear,  
 Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.

*To CORDELIA*

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<sup>17</sup> Vassal, miscreant: villain

<sup>18</sup> Forbear: don't do it



The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,  
That justly thinkest, and hast most rightly said!

*To All*

Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;  
He'll shape his old course in a country new.

*Exit*

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with KING OF FRANCE, BURGUNDY, and Attendants*

**GLOUCESTER**

Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

**KING LEAR**

My lord of Burgundy.

We first address towards you, who with this king  
Hath rivalled for our daughter: what, in the least,  
Will you require in present dower with her,  
Or cease your quest of love?

**BURGUNDY**

Most royal majesty,  
I crave no more than what your highness offered,  
Nor will you tender less.

**KING LEAR**

Right noble Burgundy,  
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;  
But now her price is fallen.  
She's there, and she is yours.

**BURGUNDY**

I know no answer.

**KING LEAR**

Will you take her, or leave her?

**BURGUNDY**

Pardon me, royal sir;  
Election makes not up on such conditions.<sup>19</sup>

**KING LEAR**

Then leave her, sir.

*To KING OF FRANCE*

For you, great king,  
I would not from your love make such a stray,  
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
To avert your liking a more worthier way

<sup>19</sup> Election makes not up on such conditions: I cannot make a decision under these circumstances



Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed  
Almost to acknowledge hers.

**KING OF FRANCE**

This is most strange,  
That she, that even but now was your best object,  
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time  
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle  
So many folds of favor.

**CORDELIA**

I yet beseech your majesty that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,  
No unchaste action, or dishonored step,  
That hath deprived me of your grace and favor;

**KING LEAR**

Better thou hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

**KING OF FRANCE**

My lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Will you have her?  
She is herself a dowry.

**BURGUNDY**

Royal Lear,  
Give but that portion which yourself proposed,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.

**BURGUNDY**

I am sorry, then.

**CORDELIA**

Peace be with Burgundy!  
Since that respects of fortune are his love,  
I shall not be his wife.

**KING OF FRANCE**

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;  
Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised!  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:  
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
Gods, gods! It is strange that from their coldest neglect  
My love should kindle to inflamed respect.  
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.

**KING LEAR**

Thou hast her, France: let her be thine; for we  
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see



That face of hers again. Therefore be gone  
Without our grace, our love, our benison.<sup>20</sup>  
Come, noble Burgundy.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but KING OF FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA*

**KING OF FRANCE**

Bid farewell to your sisters.

**CORDELIA**

I know you what you are;  
And like a sister am most loath to call  
Your faults as they are named. Use well our father:  
To your professed bosoms I commit him  
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,  
I would prefer him to a better place.  
So, farewell to you both.

**KING OF FRANCE**

Come, my fair Cordelia.

*Exeunt KING OF FRANCE and CORDELIA*

**GONERIL**

Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what most nearly appertains<sup>21</sup> to us both. I think our father will hence to-night.

**REGAN**

That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.

**GONERIL**

You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

**REGAN**

It is the infirmity of his age.

**GONERIL**

We must do something, and in the heat<sup>22</sup>.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE 2: The Earl of Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter EDMUND, with a letter*

**EDMUND**

<sup>20</sup> Benison: blessing

<sup>21</sup> Appertains: concerns

<sup>22</sup> And in the heat: strike while the iron is hot.



Wherefore should I  
 Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines  
 Lag of a brother<sup>23</sup>? Why bastard? wherefore<sup>24</sup> base?  
 When my dimensions are as well compact,  
 My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
 As honest madam's issue?  
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land: fine word,--legitimate!  
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
 Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:  
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

*Enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER**

Edmund, how now! What news?

**EDMUND**

So please your lordship, none.

*Putting away the letter*

**GLOUCESTER**

Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

**EDMUND**

I know no news, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

What paper were you reading?

**EDMUND**

Nothing, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

No? What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

**EDMUND**

I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all over-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your over-looking.

**GLOUCESTER**

Give me the letter, sir.

**EDMUND**

I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

**GLOUCESTER**

<sup>23</sup> For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines lag of a brother: I am 12 or 14 months younger than my brother.

<sup>24</sup> Wherefore: why



Let's see, let's see.

[Reads the letter] 'This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.'

Hum--conspiracy!--My son Edgar!

Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in?--When came this to you?

Who brought it?

**EDMUND**

It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet<sup>25</sup>.

**GLOUCESTER**

You know the character to be your brother's?

**EDMUND**

It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

**GLOUCESTER**

Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

**EDMUND**

Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

**GLOUCESTER**

O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than brutish! Go, sir, seek him; I'll apprehend him: abominable villain! Where is he?

**EDMUND**

I do not well know, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

He cannot be such a monster--

**EDMUND**

Nor is not, sure.

**GLOUCESTER**

To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out.

**EDMUND**

I will seek him, sir, presently.

**GLOUCESTER**

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects:<sup>26</sup> love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked betwixt<sup>27</sup> son and father. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully.

<sup>25</sup> Closet: room

<sup>26</sup> Sequent effects: disasters that follow the eclipses

<sup>27</sup> Betwixt: between



*Exit*

**EDMUND**

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,--often the surfeit of our own behavior,--we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treacherous, by spherical predominance;<sup>28</sup> drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on!

Enter EDGAR

**EDGAR**

How now, brother Edmund! What serious contemplation are you in

**EDMUND**

I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

**EDGAR**

Do you busy yourself about that?

**EDMUND**

I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities;<sup>29</sup> divisions in state, menaces against king and nobles; needless diffidences<sup>30</sup>, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial<sup>31</sup> breaches, and I know not what.

**EDGAR**

How long have you been a sectary astronomical<sup>32</sup>?

**EDMUND**

Come, come; when saw you my father last?

**EDGAR**

Why, the night gone by.

**EDMUND**

Spake you with him?

**EDGAR**

Ay, two hours together.

**EDMUND**

Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance?

**EDGAR**

None at all.

**EDMUND**

Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him: and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure.

**EDGAR**

<sup>28</sup> Spherical predominance: the influence of the planets

<sup>29</sup> Amities: friendships

<sup>30</sup> Diffidences: differences

<sup>31</sup> Nuptial: relating to weddings

<sup>32</sup> Sectary astronomical: astrologer



Some villain hath done me wrong.

**EDMUND**

That's my fear. I pray you, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: pray ye go; there's my key: if you do stir abroad, go armed.

**EDGAR**

Armed, brother!

**EDMUND**

Brother, I advise you to the best; go armed: I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away.

**EDGAR**

Shall I hear from you anon?

**EDMUND**

I do serve you in this business.

*Exit EDGAR*

A credulous<sup>33</sup> father! And a brother noble,  
Whose nature is so far from doing harms,  
That he suspects none: on whose foolish honesty  
My practices ride easy! I see the business.  
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:  
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

*Exit*

### **SCENE 3. The Duke of Albany's palace.**

*Enter GONERIL, and OSWALD, her steward (an official who controls the domestic affairs of the castle)*

**GONERIL**

Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool<sup>34</sup>?

**OSWALD**

Yes, madam.

**GONERIL**

By day and night he wrongs me; every hour  
He flashes into one gross crime or other,  
That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:  
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us  
On every trifle<sup>35</sup>. When he returns from hunting,  
I will not speak with him; say I am sick:

**OSWALD**

<sup>33</sup> Credulous: believing

<sup>34</sup> Fool: jester

<sup>35</sup> Trifle: thing of little importance



He's coming, madam; I hear him.

*Horns within*

**GONERIL**

Put on what weary negligence you please,  
 You and your fellows; If he dislike it, let him to our sister,  
 Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,  
 Not to be over-ruled.  
 And let his knights have colder looks among you;  
 What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:  
 I'll write straight to my sister,  
 To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.

*Exeunt*

#### **SCENE 4: A hall in the Duke of Albany's palace**

*Enter KENT, disguised*

**KENT**

If but as well I other accents borrow,  
 That can my speech diffuse<sup>36</sup>, my good intent  
 May carry through itself to that full issue  
 For which I razed<sup>37</sup> my likeness.

*Horns within. Enter KING LEAR, Knights, and Attendants*

**KING LEAR**

Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready.

*Exit an Attendant*

How now! What art thou?

**KENT**

A man, sir.

**KING LEAR**

What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us<sup>38</sup>?

**KENT**

I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust: to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little; to fear judgment; to fight when I cannot choose.

<sup>36</sup> Diffuse: disguise

<sup>37</sup> Razed: changed

<sup>38</sup> What wouldst thou with us: what do you want from me?



**KING LEAR**

What art thou?

**KENT**

A very honest-hearted fellow.

**KING LEAR**

What wouldst thou?

**KENT**

Service.

**KING LEAR**

Who wouldst thou serve?

**KENT**

You.

**KING LEAR**

Dost thou know me, fellow?

**KENT**

No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain<sup>39</sup> call master.

**KING LEAR**

What's that?

**KENT**

Authority.

**KING LEAR**

What services canst thou do?

**KENT**

I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in; and the best of me is diligence.

**KING LEAR**

How old art thou?

**KENT**

I have years on my back forty eight.

**KING LEAR**

Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet.

*Enter OSWALD*

You, you, sirrah<sup>40</sup>, where's my daughter?

**OSWALD**

So please you,--

*He exits*

**KING LEAR**

What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll<sup>41</sup> back.

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<sup>39</sup> Fain: enjoy

<sup>40</sup> Sirrah: sir

<sup>41</sup> Clotpole: blockhead



*Exit a Knight to summon Oswald, then re-enter alone.*

How now! Where's that mongrel?

**Knight**

He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

**KING LEAR**

Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?

**Knight**

Sir, he answered me in the roundest<sup>42</sup> manner, he would not.

**KING LEAR**

He would not!

**Knight**

My lord, I know not what the matter is; but, to my judgment, your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont<sup>43</sup>.

**KING LEAR**

Ha! Sayest thou so?

**Knight**

I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged.

**KING LEAR**

I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into it. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her.

*Exit Knight*

*Re-enter OSWALD*

O, you sir, you, come you hither, sir: who am I, sir?

**OSWALD**

My lady's father.

**KING LEAR**

'My lady's father'! my lord's knave: you whoreson dog! you slave! you cur!

**OSWALD**

I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

**KING LEAR**

Do you bandy<sup>44</sup> looks with me, you rascal?

*Striking him*

**OSWALD**

I'll not be struck, my lord.

<sup>42</sup> Roundest: rudest

<sup>43</sup> Wont: accustomed to

<sup>44</sup> Bandy: throw



**KENT**

Nor tripped neither, you base football player.

*Tripping up his heels*

**KING LEAR**

I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

**KENT**

Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences: away, away!

*Pushes OSWALD out*

**KING LEAR**

Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest<sup>45</sup> of thy service.

*Giving KENT money*

*Enter GONERIL*

**KING LEAR**

How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet<sup>46</sup> on?  
Methinks you are too much of late in the frown.

**GONERIL**

Your insolent retinue  
Do hourly carp and quarrel; breaking forth  
In rank and not-to-be endured riots. Sir,  
I had thought, by making this well known unto you,  
To have found a safe redress<sup>47</sup>.

**KING LEAR**

Are you our daughter?

**GONERIL**

Come, sir,  
I would you would make use of that good wisdom,  
Whereof I know you are fraught<sup>48</sup>; and put away  
These dispositions, that of late transform you  
From what you rightly are.

**KING LEAR**

Doth any here know me? This is not Lear:  
Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, his discernings

---

<sup>45</sup> Earnest: payment

<sup>46</sup> Frontlet: frown

<sup>47</sup> Redress: remedy

<sup>48</sup> Fraught: full of



Are lethargied<sup>49</sup>--Ha! waking? 'tis not so.  
 Who is it that can tell me who I am?  
 Your name, fair gentlewoman?

**GONERIL**

This admiration<sup>50</sup>, sir, is much of the savor<sup>51</sup>  
 Of other your new pranks.  
 Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;  
 Men so disordered, so deboshed<sup>52</sup> and bold,  
 That this our court, infected with their manners,  
 Shows more like a tavern or a brothel  
 Than a graced palace. Be then desired,  
 A little to disquantity<sup>53</sup> your train.

**KING LEAR**

Darkness and devils!  
 Saddle my horses; call my train together:  
 Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee.  
 Yet have I left a daughter.

**GONERIL**

You strike my people; and your disordered rabble  
 Make servants of their betters.

*Enter ALBANY*

**KING LEAR**

Woe, that too late repents,--

*To ALBANY*

O, sir, are you come?  
 Is it your will? Speak, sir.  
 Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
 More hideous when thou showest thee in a child  
 Than the sea-monster!

**ALBANY**

Pray, sir, be patient.

**KING LEAR**

[To GONERIL] Detested kite<sup>54</sup>! thou liest.  
 My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
 That all particulars of duty know,

<sup>49</sup> his discernings are lethargied: mind is asleep

<sup>50</sup> Admiration: fake astonishment

<sup>51</sup> Much of the savor: much like

<sup>52</sup> Deboshed: dishonorable

<sup>53</sup> Disquantity: reduce

<sup>54</sup> Kite: vulture



And in the most exact regard support  
 The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
 O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
 Beat at this gate, that let thy folly<sup>55</sup> in,

*Striking his head*

And thy dear judgment out! Go, go, my people.

**ALBANY**

My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant  
 Of what hath moved you.

**KING LEAR**

It may be so, my lord.

Hear, nature, hear; dear goddess, hear!  
 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend  
 To make this creature fruitful!  
 Into her womb convey sterility!  
 Dry up in her the organs of increase;  
 And from her derogate body never spring  
 A babe to honor her! If she must teem<sup>56</sup>,  
 Create her child that it may live,  
 And be a thwart disnatured torment to her  
 That she may feel  
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
 To have a thankless child! Away, away!

*Exit*

**ALBANY**

Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

**GONERIL**

Never afflict yourself to know the cause;  
 But let his disposition have that scope  
 That dotage<sup>57</sup> gives it.

*Re-enter KING LEAR*

**KING LEAR**

What, fifty of my followers at a clap!  
 Within a fortnight!

**ALBANY**

---

<sup>55</sup> Folly: foolishness

<sup>56</sup> Teem: have children

<sup>57</sup> Dotage: senility



What's the matter, sir?

**KING LEAR**

I'll tell thee:

*To GONERIL*

Yea, it is come to this?

Let is be so: yet have I left a daughter,

Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:

When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails

She'll flay thy wolvisish visage<sup>58</sup>.

*Exeunt KING LEAR, KENT, and Attendants*

**GONERIL**

Do you mark that, my lord?

**ALBANY**

I cannot be so partial<sup>59</sup>, Goneril,

To the great love I bear you,--

**GONERIL**

This man hath had good counsel:--a hundred knights!

He may enguard<sup>60</sup> his dotage with their powers,

And hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say!

**ALBANY**

Well, you may fear too far.

**GONERIL**

Safer than trust too far:

What he hath uttered I have writ my sister

If she sustain him and his hundred knights

When I have showed the unfitness,--

*Re-enter OSWALD*

How now, Oswald!

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

**OSWALD**

Yes, madam.

**GONERIL**

Take you some company, and away to horse:

Inform her full of my particular fear.

*Exeunt*

<sup>58</sup> Visage: face

<sup>59</sup> Partial: favor one side

<sup>60</sup> Enguard: protect



**SCENE 5: Courtyard in front of the Duke of Albany's castle**

*Enter KING LEAR, and KENT*

**KING LEAR**

Go you before to Gloucester<sup>61</sup> with these letters.

**KENT**

I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your letter.

*Exit*

*Enter Gentleman*

How now! are the horses ready?

**Gentleman**

Ready, my lord.

*Exeunt*

**ACT 2****SCENE 1: GLOUCESTER's castle.**

*Enter EDMUND, and CURAN (a gentleman in Gloucester's house)*

**EDMUND**

Save thee, Curan.

**CURAN**

And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him this night.

**EDMUND**

How comes that?

**CURAN**

Nay, I know not. Fare you well, sir.

*Exit*

**EDMUND**

The duke be here to-night? The better! best!  
This weaves itself perforce into my business.

---

<sup>61</sup> Gloucester: the town where Regan lives



My father hath set guard to take my brother;  
And I have one thing, of a queasy question,  
Which I must act: briefness and fortune, work!  
Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

*Enter EDGAR*

My father watches: O sir, fly this place;  
Intelligence is given where you are hid;  
You have now the good advantage of the night:  
Have you not spoken against the Duke of Cornwall?  
He's coming hither: now, in the night, in the haste,  
And Regan with him: have you nothing said  
Upon his party against the Duke of Albany?

**EDGAR**

I am sure on it, not a word.

**EDMUND**

I hear my father coming: pardon me:  
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you  
Draw; seem to defend yourself; now quit you well.  
Yield: come before my father. Light, ho, here!  
Fly, brother. Torches, torches! So, farewell.

*Exit EDGAR*

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion.

*Wounds his arm*

Father, father!  
Stop, stop! No help?

*Enter GLOUCESTER and Servants with torches*

**GLOUCESTER**

Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

**EDMUND**

Look, sir, I bleed.

**GLOUCESTER**

Where is the villain, Edmund?

**EDMUND**

Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could--

**GLOUCESTER**

Pursue him, ho! Go after.



*Exeunt some Servants*

By no means what?

**EDMUND**

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;  
 Seeing how loathly opposite I stood  
 To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,  
 With his prepared sword, he charges home  
 My unprovided<sup>62</sup> body, lanced mine arm:  
 But when he saw my best alarumed<sup>63</sup> spirits,  
 Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to the encounter,  
 Or whether gasted<sup>64</sup> by the noise I made,  
 Full suddenly he fled.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let him fly far:  
 Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;  
 The noble duke my master,  
 My worthy arch and patron, comes to-night:  
 By his authority I will proclaim it,  
 That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,  
 Bringing the murderous coward to the stake;  
 He that conceals him, death.

**EDMUND**

When I dissuaded him from his intent,  
 And found him pight<sup>65</sup> to do it, with curst speech  
 I threatened to discover him: he replied,  
 'Thou unpossessing bastard! Dot thou think,  
 If I would stand against thee, would the reposal<sup>66</sup>  
 Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee  
 Make thy words faithed<sup>67</sup>?'

**GLOUCESTER**

Strong and fasten'd villain  
 Would he deny his letter?

*Trumpets within*

Hark, the duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.  
 All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not escape.

---

<sup>62</sup> Unprovided: unarmed

<sup>63</sup> Alarumed: called to arms

<sup>64</sup> Gasted: frightened

<sup>65</sup> Pight: determined

<sup>66</sup> Reposal: trust or reliance in something

<sup>67</sup> Faithed: believed



Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee capable.

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, and Attendants*

**CORNWALL**

How now, my noble friend! Since I came hither,  
I have heard strange news.

**REGAN**

If it be true, all vengeance comes too short.  
How dost, my lord?

**GLOUCESTER**

O, madam, my old heart is cracked, it's cracked!

**REGAN**

What, did my father's godson seek your life?  
He whom my father named? Your Edgar?

**GLOUCESTER**

O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

**REGAN**

Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
That tend upon my father?

**GLOUCESTER**

I know not, madam: 'tis too bad, too bad.

**EDMUND**

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

**REGAN**

No marvel, then, though he were ill affected:  
I have this present evening from my sister  
Been well informed of them; and with such cautions,  
That if they come to sojourn at my house,  
I'll not be there.

**CORNWALL**

Nor I, assure thee, Regan.  
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A child-like office.

**EDMUND**

It was my duty, sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

He did bewray his practise<sup>68</sup>; and received  
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

**CORNWALL**

Is he pursued?

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, my good lord.

---

<sup>68</sup> He did bewray his practise: he revealed Edgar's plot

**CORNWALL**

If he be taken, he shall never more  
 Be feared of doing harm. For you, Edmund,  
 Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant  
 So much commend itself, you shall be ours:  
 Natures of such deep trust we shall much need;  
 You we first seize on.

**EDMUND**

I shall serve you, sir,  
 Truly, however else.

**CORNWALL**

You know not why we came to visit you,--

**REGAN**

Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,  
 Of differences, which I least thought it fit  
 To answer from our home; the several messengers  
 From hence attend dispatch<sup>69</sup>. Our good old friend,  
 Lay comforts to your bosom<sup>70</sup>; and bestow  
 Your needful counsel to our business,  
 Which craves the instant use.

**GLOUCESTER**

I serve you, madam:  
 Your graces are right welcome.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE 2: In front of Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter KENT and OSWALD*

**OSWALD**

Good dawning to thee, friend: art of this house?

**KENT**

Ay.

**OSWALD**

Where may we set our horses?

**KENT**

In the mire.

**OSWALD**

Prithee<sup>71</sup>, if thou lovest me, tell me.

**KENT**

I love thee not.

<sup>69</sup> Attend dispatch: are waiting to be dismissed

<sup>70</sup> Bosom: heart

<sup>71</sup> Prithee: I pray thee



**OSWALD**

Why, then, I care not for thee.

**KENT**

Fellow, I know thee.

**OSWALD**

What dost thou know me for?

**KENT**

A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave, a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd, in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.

**OSWALD**

Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

**KENT**

What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels, and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue, you whoreson barber-monger, draw.

*Drawing his sword*

**OSWALD**

Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

**KENT**

Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the king

**OSWALD**

Help, ho! murder! help!

**KENT**

Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand; you neat slave, strike.

*Beating him*

**OSWALD**

Help, ho! murder! murder!

*Enter EDMUND, with his sword drawn, CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and Servants*

**EDMUND**

How now! What's the matter?

**KENT**

With you, boy, an you please: come, I'll flesh ye; come on, young master.

**GLOUCESTER**

Weapons! arms! What's the matter here?



**CORNWALL**

Keep peace, upon your lives:  
He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

**REGAN**

The messengers from our sister and the king.

**CORNWALL**

What is your difference? Speak.

**OSWALD**

This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard,--

**KENT**

Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a jakes<sup>72</sup> with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail?

**CORNWALL**

Peace, sirrah!  
You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

**KENT**

Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege.

**CORNWALL**

Why art thou angry?

**KENT**

That such a slave as this should wear a sword,  
Who wears no honesty.

**CORNWALL**

Why, art thou mad, old fellow?

**GLOUCESTER**

How fell you out? Say that.

**CORNWALL**

What was the offence you gave him?

**OSWALD**

I never gave him any:  
It pleased the king his master very late  
To strike at me.

**CORNWALL**

Fetch forth the stocks!  
You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,  
We'll teach you--

**KENT**

Sir, I am too old to learn:  
Call not your stocks for me: I serve the king;  
On whose employment I was sent to you:  
You shall do small respect, show too bold malice  
Against the grace and person of my master,  
Stocking his messenger.

---

<sup>72</sup> Jakes: outhouse



**CORNWALL**

Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honor,  
There shall he sit till noon.

**REGAN**

Till noon! Till night, my lord; and all night too.

**KENT**

Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,  
You should not use me so.

**REGAN**

Sir, being his knave, I will.

*Stocks brought out*

**GLOUCESTER**

Let me beseech your grace not to do so:  
His fault is much, and the good king his master  
Will check him for it: the king must take it ill,  
That he's so slightly valued in his messenger,  
Should have him thus restrained.

**CORNWALL**

I'll answer that.

**REGAN**

My sister may receive it much more worse,  
To have her gentleman abused, assaulted,  
For following her affairs. Put in his legs.

*KENT is put in the stocks*

Come, my good lord, away.

*Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER and KENT*

**GLOUCESTER**

I am sorry for thee, friend; I'll entreat for thee.

**KENT**

Pray, do not, sir: I have watched and travelled hard;  
Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.

**GLOUCESTER**

The duke's to blame in this; it will be ill taken.

*Exit*

**KENT**

I may peruse this letter! I know it is from Cordelia,  
Who hath most fortunately been informed



Of my obscured<sup>73</sup> course; and shall find time  
 From this enormous state, seeking to give  
 Losses their remedies.  
 Fortune, good night: smile once more!

*Sleeps*

**SCENE 3: A wood.**

*Enter EDGAR*

**EDGAR**

No port is free; no place,  
 That guard, and most unusual vigilance,  
 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may escape,  
 I will preserve myself: my face I'll grime with filth;  
 Blanket my loins: elf<sup>74</sup> all my hair in knots.  
 The country gives me proof and precedent  
 Of Bedlam beggars.<sup>75</sup> Poor Tom!  
 That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.<sup>76</sup>

*Exit*

**SCENE 4: In front of GLOUCESTER's castle. KENT in the stocks.**

*Enter KING LEAR and Gentleman*

**KING LEAR**

It is strange that they should so depart from home,  
 And not send back my messenger.

**KENT**

Hail to thee, noble master!

**KING LEAR**

Ha!

Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

**KENT**

No, my lord.

**KING LEAR**

What's he that hath so much thy place mistook  
 To set thee here?

**KENT**

---

<sup>73</sup> Obscured: disguises

<sup>74</sup> Elf: tangle

<sup>75</sup> Bedlam beggars: beggars fit for an asylum

<sup>76</sup> Edgar disguises himself as a madman named Tom of Bedlam, so he will not be captured.



It is both he and she;  
Your son and daughter.

**KING LEAR**

No.

**KENT**

Yes.

**KING LEAR**

They durst not do it;  
They could not, would not do it; it is worse than murder,  
To do upon respect such violent outrage:  
Resolve me<sup>77</sup>, with all modest haste, which way  
Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage.

**KENT**

My lord, when at their home  
I did commend your highness' letters to them,  
Ere I was risen from the place that showed  
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,  
half breathless, panting forth  
From Goneril his mistress salutations;  
Delivered letters, spite of intermission<sup>78</sup>,  
Which presently they read:  
Commaned me to follow, and attend  
The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks:  
And meeting here the other messenger,  
Whose welcome, I perceived, had poisoned mine,--  
Being the very fellow that of late  
Displayed so saucily against your highness,--  
Having more man than wit about me, drew:  
He raised the house with loud and coward cries.  
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth  
The shame which here it suffers.

**KING LEAR**

O, how this mother<sup>79</sup> swells up toward my heart!  
Where is this daughter?

**KENT**

With the earl, sir, here within.

**KING LEAR**

Follow me not;  
Stay here.

*Exit*

---

<sup>77</sup> Resolve me: explain to me

<sup>78</sup> Spite of intermission: although he interrupted me

<sup>79</sup> This mother: hysteria



**Gentleman**

Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

**KENT**

None.

*Re-enter KING LEAR with GLOUCESTER*

**KING LEAR**

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?  
They have travelled all the night?  
Fetch me a better answer.

**GLOUCESTER**

My dear lord,  
You know the fiery quality of the duke;  
How unremoveable<sup>80</sup> and fixed he is  
In his own course.

**KING LEAR**

Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!  
Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,  
I would speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.

**KING LEAR**

Informed them! Dost thou understand me, man?

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, my good lord.

**KING LEAR**

The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father  
Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:  
Are they informed of this? Wherefore should he sit here?  
Give me my servant forth.  
Go tell the duke and his wife I would speak with them,  
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,  
Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum  
Till it cry sleep to death.

**GLOUCESTER**

I would have all well betwixt you.

*Exit*

**KING LEAR**

O me, my heart, my rising heart!

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and Servants*

---

<sup>80</sup> Unremovable: stubborn



**KING LEAR**

Good morrow to you both.

**CORNWALL**

Hail to your grace!

*KENT is freed*

**REGAN**

I am glad to see your highness.

**KING LEAR**

Regan, I think you are.

*To KENT*

O, are you free?

Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,  
Thy sister's naught<sup>81</sup>: O Regan, she hath tied  
Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here:

*Points to his heart*

I can scarce speak to thee; thou wilt not believe  
With how depraved a quality--O Regan!

**REGAN**

I cannot think my sister in the least  
Would fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance  
She have restrained the riots of your followers,  
It is on such ground, and to such wholesome end,  
As clears her from all blame.

**KING LEAR**

My curses on her!

**REGAN**

O, sir, you are old.  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confine<sup>82</sup>: you should be ruled and led  
By some discretion, that discerns your state  
Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,  
That to our sister you do make return;  
Say you have wronged her, sir.

**KING LEAR** Ask her forgiveness?

Do you but mark how this becomes the house:

*Kneeling, pretending to speak to Goneril*

---

<sup>81</sup> Naught: worthless

<sup>82</sup> Confine: limit



'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;  
Age is unnecessary: on my knees I beg  
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment<sup>83</sup>, bed, and food.'

**REGAN**

Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks:  
Return you to my sister.

**KING LEAR**

*Rising*

Never, Regan:  
She hath abated me<sup>84</sup> of half my train;  
Looked black upon me; struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:  
Strike her young bones with lameness!

**CORNWALL**

Fie, sir, fie!

**KING LEAR**

You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames  
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,  
You fen<sup>85</sup>-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,  
To fall and blast her pride!

**REGAN**

O the blest gods! So will you wish on me,  
When the rash mood is on.

**KING LEAR**

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:  
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give  
Thee over to harshness: her eyes are fierce; but thine  
Do comfort and not burn. It is not in thee  
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,  
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,  
And in conclusion to oppose the bolt  
Against my coming in;  
Thy half of the kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
Wherein I thee endowed.

**REGAN**

Good sir, to the purpose.

**KING LEAR**

Who put my man in the stocks?

*Trumpet within*

---

<sup>83</sup> Raiment: clothes

<sup>84</sup> Abated me: taken away from me

<sup>85</sup> Fen" swamp



**CORNWALL**

What trumpet's that?

**REGAN**

I know it, my sister's: this approves<sup>86</sup> her letter,  
That she would soon be here.

*Enter OSWALD*

Is your lady come?

**KING LEAR**

This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride  
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.  
Out from my sight!

**CORNWALL**

What means your grace?

**KING LEAR**

Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope  
Thou didst not know on it. Who comes here? O heavens,

*Enter GONERIL*

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,  
Make it your cause; send down, and take my part!

*To GONERIL*

Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?  
O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

**GONERIL**

Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended?

**KING LEAR**

How came my man in the stocks?

**CORNWALL**

I set him there, sir.

**KING LEAR**

You! Did you?

**REGAN**

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.  
If, till the expiration of your month,  
You will return and sojourn<sup>87</sup> with my sister,  
Dismissing half your train, come then to me.

---

<sup>86</sup> Approves: confirms

<sup>87</sup> Sojourn: stay



**KING LEAR** Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?

No, rather I abjure<sup>88</sup> all roofs, and choose  
To wage against the enmity<sup>89</sup> of the air;  
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl.

**GONERIL**

At your choice, sir.

**KING LEAR**

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:  
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:  
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:  
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;  
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,  
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,  
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,  
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;  
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:  
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,  
I and my hundred knights.

**REGAN**

Not altogether so:  
I looked not for you yet, nor am provided  
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;  
She knows what she does.

**KING LEAR**

Is this well spoken?

**REGAN**

I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?  
Is it not well? What should you need of more?

**GONERIL**

Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance  
From those that she calls servants or from mine?

**REGAN**

Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,  
We could control them. If you will come to me,  
I entreat you to bring but five and twenty:  
To no more will I give place or notice.

**KING LEAR**

I gave you all--

**REGAN**

And in good time you gave it.

**KING LEAR**

Made you my guardians, my depositaries;  
But kept a reservation to be followed

---

<sup>88</sup> Abjure: reject

<sup>89</sup> Enmity: enemy



With such a number. What, must I come to you  
With five and twenty, Regan? Said you so?

**REGAN**

And speakest again, my lord; no more with me.

**KING LEAR**

Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favoured,  
When others are more wicked: not being the worst  
Stands in some rank of praise.

*To GONERIL*

I'll go with thee:

Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,  
And thou art twice her love.

**GONERIL**

Hear me, my lord;

What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,  
To follow in a house where twice so many  
Have a command to tend you?

**REGAN**

What need one?

**KING LEAR**

O, reason not the need:

Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wearest,  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,--  
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!  
I will have such revenges on you both,  
That all the world shall--I will do such things,--  
What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be  
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep  
No, I'll not weep:  
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart  
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep.

*Exeunt KING LEAR, GLOUCESTER and KENT*

*Stormy weather approaches*

**CORNWALL**

Let us withdraw; it will be a storm.

**REGAN**

This house is little: the old man and his people  
Cannot be well bestowed.

**GONERIL**



It is his own blame.

**REGAN**

I'll receive him gladly,  
But not one follower.

**GONERIL**

So am I purposed.  
Where is my lord of Gloucester?

**CORNWALL**

Followed the old man forth: he is returned.

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is in high rage.

**CORNWALL**

Whither is he going?

**GLOUCESTER**

He calls to horse; but will I know not whither.

**CORNWALL**

It is best to give him way; he leads himself.

**GONERIL**

My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds  
Do sorely ruffle.

**REGAN**

Shut up your doors:

He is attended with a desperate train.

**CORNWALL**

Shut up your doors, my lord; it is a wild night:  
My Regan counsels well; come out of the storm.

*Exeunt*

## **ACT 3**

### **SCENE 1: A heath.**

*Storm still. Enter KENT and a Gentleman*

**KENT**

Who's there, besides foul weather?

**Gentleman**

One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

**KENT**



I know you. Where's the king?

**Gentleman**

Contending with the fretful element:

**KENT**

Sir, I do know you;

And dare, upon the warrant of my note,

Commend a dear thing to you.

From France there comes a power

Into this scattered kingdom; who already,

Wise in our negligence, have secret feet

In some of our best ports, and are at point

To show their open banner. Now to you:

If on my credit you dare build so far

To make your speed to Dover, you shall find

Some that will thank you, making just report

Of how unnatural and bemadding<sup>90</sup> sorrow

The king hath cause to plain<sup>91</sup>.

**Gentleman**

I will talk further with you.

**KENT**

No, do not.

Open this purse, and take

What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,--

As fear not but you shall,--show her this ring;

And she will tell you who your fellow is

That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!

I will go seek the king.

**Gentleman**

Give me your hand: have you no more to say?

**KENT**

Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet;

That, when we have found the king,--in which your pain

That way, I'll this,--he that first lights on him

Holla<sup>92</sup> the other.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE 2: Another part of the heath.**

*Enter KING LEAR*

**KING LEAR**

---

<sup>90</sup> Bemadding: maddening

<sup>91</sup> Plain: complain about

<sup>92</sup> Holla: shout to



Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!

*Enter KENT*

**KENT**

Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night  
Love not such nights as these.

**KING LEAR**

Let the great gods,  
That keep this dreadful pother<sup>93</sup> over our heads,  
Find out their enemies now. I am a man  
More sinned against than sinning.

**KENT**

Alack, bare-headed!  
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel<sup>94</sup>:  
Some friendship will it lend you against the tempest:  
Repose you there.

**KING LEAR**

My wits begin to turn.  
The art of our necessities is strange,  
That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.

*Exeunt*

### **SCENE 3: Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND*

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desire their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him.

**EDMUND**

Most savage and unnatural!

**GLOUCESTER**

Go to; say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the dukes; and a worse matter than that: I have received a letter this night; 'tis dangerous to be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet: these injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there's part of a power already footed: we must incline to the king. I will seek him, and privily<sup>95</sup> relieve him: go you and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived: if he ask for me. I am ill, and gone to bed. Edmund; pray you, be careful.

<sup>93</sup> Pother: confusion

<sup>94</sup> Hovel: shack

<sup>95</sup> Privily: secretly



*Exit*

**EDMUND**

This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke  
Instantly know; and of that letter too:  
This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me  
That which my father loses; no less than all:  
The younger rises when the old doth fall.

*Exit*

**SCENE 4: The heath, in front of the hovel.**

*Enter KING LEAR and KENT*

**KENT**

Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter.

**KING LEAR**

Let me alone.

**KENT**

Good my lord, enter here.

**KING LEAR**

Thou thinkest it is much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin: so it is to thee;  
But where the greater malady is fixed<sup>96</sup>,  
The lesser is scarce felt. In such a night  
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.  
In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!  
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all,--  
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;  
No more of that.

**KENT**

Good my lord, enter here.

**KING LEAR**

Prithee, go in thyself: seek thine own ease:  
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.

**EDGAR**

[Within] Poor Tom!

**KENT**

What art thou that dost grumble there in the straw?  
Come forth.

---

<sup>96</sup> Fixed: lodged



*Enter EDGAR disguised as a mad man*

**EDGAR**

Away! the foul fiend follows me!  
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.  
Hum! Go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

**KING LEAR**

Hast thou given all to thy two daughters?  
And art thou come to this?

**EDGAR**

Who gives any thing to poor Tom? Whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame.  
Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold. Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes.

**KING LEAR**

What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?  
Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

**KENT**

He hath no daughters, sir.

**KING LEAR**

Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.

**EDGAR**

Take heed of the foul fiend: obey thy parents; keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with  
man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array<sup>97</sup>. Tom's a-cold.

**KING LEAR**

What hast thou been?

**EDGAR**

A serving-man, proud in heart and mind.

**KING LEAR**

Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the  
skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no  
hide, the sheep no wool. Thou art the thing itself: Off, off, you lendings<sup>98</sup>! Come unbutton here.

*Tearing off his clothes*

*Enter GLOUCESTER, with a torch*

**EDGAR**

This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet  
Bid her alight,  
And her troth plight<sup>99</sup>,  
And, aroint<sup>100</sup> thee, witch, aroint thee!

<sup>97</sup> Array: clothing

<sup>98</sup> Lendings: clothes

<sup>99</sup> Plight: pledge

<sup>100</sup> Aroint: get away



**KENT**

How fares your grace?

**KING LEAR**

What's he?

**KENT**

Who's there? What is it you seek?

**GLOUCESTER**

What are you there? Your names?

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets<sup>101</sup>; swallows the old rat, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, hath your grace no better company?

**EDGAR**

The prince of darkness is a gentleman.

**GLOUCESTER**

Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,  
That it doth hate what gets it.

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom's a-cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

Go in with me: my duty cannot suffer  
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands:  
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,  
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,  
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out,  
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

**KING LEAR**

First let me talk with this philosopher.

What is the cause of thunder?

**KENT**

Good my lord, take his offer; go into the house.

**KING LEAR**

I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.<sup>102</sup>

What is your study?

**EDGAR**

How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

**KING LEAR**

Let me ask you one word in private.

**KENT**

Importune<sup>103</sup> him once more to go, my lord;

His wits begin to unsettle.

---

<sup>101</sup> Sallets: treats

<sup>102</sup> Theban: citizen of Thebes



**GLOUCESTER**

Canst thou blame him?  
 His daughters seek his death!  
 Thou sayest the king grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend,  
 I am almost mad myself: I had a son,  
 Now outlawed from my blood; he sought my life,  
 The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!  
 I do beseech your grace,--

**KING LEAR**

O, cry your mercy, sir.  
 Noble philosopher, your company.

**EDGAR**

Tom's a-cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

In, fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee warm.

**KING LEAR**

Come let's in all.

**KENT**

This way, my lord.

**KING LEAR**

With him;  
 I will keep still with my philosopher.

**KENT**

Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the fellow.

**GLOUCESTER**

Take him you on.

**KENT**

Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

**KING LEAR**

Come, good Athenian.

**GLOUCESTER**

No words, no words: hush.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE 5: Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND*

**CORNWALL**

I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death; but a reprovable badness in himself.

**EDMUND**


---

<sup>103</sup> Importune: beg

How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France: O heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

**CORNWALL**

Go with me to the duchess.

**EDMUND**

If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

**CORNWALL**

I will lay trust upon thee; and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE 6: The Hovel**

*Enter GLOUCESTER, KING LEAR, KENT, and EDGAR*

**GLOUCESTER**

Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can: I will not be long from you.

**KENT**

All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience: the gods reward your kindness!

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

**EDGAR**

Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

**KING LEAR**

Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer.

**EDGAR**

The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale.

**KENT**

How do you, sir?

Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

**KING LEAR**

I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence.

*To EDGAR*

Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;

*To KENT*

You are of the commission,

Sit you too.

**EDGAR**



Let us deal justly.

**KING LEAR**

*Addressing a stool*

Arraign her first; it is Goneril. I here take my oath before this honorable assembly, she kicked the poor king her father. And here's another, whose warped looks proclaim what store her heart is made on. Stop her there! Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place! False justicer, why hast thou let her escape?

**EDGAR**

Bless thy five wits!

**KENT**

O pity! Sir, where is the patience now,  
That thou so oft have boasted to retain?

**EDGAR**

[Aside] My tears begin to take his part so much,  
They'll mar my counterfeiting.

**KING LEAR**

Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?

*To EDGAR*

You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments.

**KENT**

Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

**KING LEAR**

Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains: so, so, so. We'll go to supper in the morning.  
So, so, so.

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER**

Come hither, friend: where is the king my master?

**KENT**

Here, sir; but trouble him not, his wits are gone.

**GLOUCESTER**

Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms;  
I have overheard a plot of death upon him:  
There is a litter ready; lay him in it,  
And drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet  
Both welcome and protection.  
Come, come, away.

*Exeunt all but EDGAR*

**EDGAR**



When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

*Exit*

### **SCENE 7: Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servants*

#### **CORNWALL**

Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. Seek out the villain Gloucester.

*Exeunt some of the Servants*

#### **REGAN**

Hang him instantly.

#### **GONERIL**

Pluck out his eyes.

#### **CORNWALL**

Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding.

*Enter OSWALD*

How now! Where's the king?

#### **OSWALD**

My lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence:  
Some five or six and thirty of his knights,  
Are gone with him towards Dover; where they boast  
To have well-armed friends.

#### **CORNWALL**

Get horses for your mistress.

#### **GONERIL**

Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

#### **CORNWALL**

Edmund, farewell.

*Exeunt GONERIL, EDMUND, and OSWALD*

Go seek the traitor Gloucester,  
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

*Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three*



**REGAN**

Ingrateful fox! It is he.

**CORNWALL**

Bind fast his corky arms.

**GLOUCESTER**

What mean your graces? Good my friends, consider

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

**CORNWALL**

Bind him, I say.

*Servants bind him*

**REGAN**

Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

**GLOUCESTER**

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

**CORNWALL**

To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find--

*REGAN plucks his beard*

**GLOUCESTER**

By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done

To pluck me by the beard.

**REGAN**

So white, and such a traitor!

**GLOUCESTER**

Naughty lady,

These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,

Will quicken<sup>104</sup>, and accuse thee: I am your host:

What will you do?

**REGAN**

To whose hands have you sent the lunatic king? Speak.

**GLOUCESTER**

To Dover.

**REGAN**

Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril--

**CORNWALL**

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

**GLOUCESTER**

I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.

**REGAN**

Wherefore to Dover, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

---

<sup>104</sup> Quicken: come to life



Because I would not see thy cruel nails  
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister  
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

**CORNWALL**

See it shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.  
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

**GLOUCESTER**

He that will think to live till he be old,  
Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!

*Cornwall plucks out Gloucester's eye*

**REGAN**

One side will mock another; the other too.

**CORNWALL**

If you see vengeance,--

**First Servant**

Hold your hand, my lord:  
I have served you ever since I was a child;  
But better service have I never done you  
Than now to bid you hold.

**REGAN**

How now, you dog!

**CORNWALL**

My villain!

*They draw and fight*

**REGAN**

Give me thy sword.

*Takes a sword, and runs at the servant from behind*

**First Servant**

O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left  
To see some mischief on him. O!

*Dies*

**CORNWALL**

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!  
Where is thy lustre now?

*Plucks out other eye*



**GLOUCESTER**

All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?  
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,  
To quit this horrid act.

**REGAN**

Out, treacherous villain!  
Thou callest on him that hates thee: it was he  
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;  
Who is too good to pity thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

O my follies! then Edgar was abused.  
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

**REGAN**

Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell  
His way to Dover.

*Exit one with GLOUCESTER*

How is it, my lord? How look you?

**CORNWALL**

I have received a hurt: follow me, lady.  
Turn out that eyeless villain; throw this slave  
Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed:  
Give me your arm.

*Exeunt*

**ACT 4****SCENE 1: The heath.**

*Enter EDGAR*

**EDGAR**

Yet better thus, and known to be condemned,  
Than still condemned and flattered. To be worst,  
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,  
Stands still in esperance<sup>105</sup>, lives not in fear:  
But who comes here?

*Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man*

---

<sup>105</sup> Esperance: hope

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!

**Old Man**

O, my good lord, I have been your tenant, and  
your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

**GLOUCESTER**

Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;  
Thee they may hurt.

**Old Man**

Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

**GLOUCESTER**

I have no way, and therefore want no eyes.

**Old Man**

How now! Who's there?

**EDGAR**

[Aside] O gods! Who is it can say 'I am at  
the worst'?

I am worse than ever I was.

**Old Man**

It is poor mad Tom.

**EDGAR**

[Aside] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not  
So long as we can say 'This is the worst.'

**Old Man**

Fellow, where goest?

**GLOUCESTER**

Is it a beggar-man?

**Old Man**

Madman and beggar too.

**GLOUCESTER**

He has some reason, else he could not beg. In the last night's storm I such a fellow saw; my son  
came then into my mind; and yet my mind was then scarce friends with him.

**EDGAR**

Bless thee, master!

**GLOUCESTER**

Is that the naked fellow?

**Old Man**

Ay, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

Then, prithee, get thee gone.

*Old Man exits*

**GLOUCESTER**

Sirrah, naked fellow,--



**EDGAR**

Poor Tom's a-cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

Come hither, fellow.

**EDGAR**

Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

**GLOUCESTER**

Knowest thou the way to Dover?

**EDGAR**

Ay, master.

**GLOUCESTER**

There is a cliff, whose high and bending head  
Looks fearfully in the confined deep:  
Bring me but to the very brim of it,  
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear  
With something rich about me: from that place  
I shall no leading need.

**EDGAR**

Give me thy arm:

Poor Tom shall lead thee.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE 2: In front of ALBANY's palace.**

*Enter GONERIL and EDMUND*

**GONERIL**

Welcome, my lord: I marvel our mild husband  
Not met us on the way.

*Enter OSWALD*

Now, where's your master?

**OSWALD**

Madam, within; but never man so changed.  
I told him of the army that was landed;  
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming:  
His answer was 'The worse': of Gloucester's treachery,  
And of the loyal service of his son,  
When I informed him, then he called me sot<sup>106</sup>,  
And told me I had turned the wrong side out:

---

<sup>106</sup> Sot: fool



What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;  
What like, offensive.

**GONERIL**

[To EDMUND] Then shall you go no further.  
Back, Edmund, to my brother;  
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers:  
This trusty servant shall pass between us:  
Ere long you are like to hear,  
If you dare venture in your own behalf,  
A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

*Giving a gift*

Decline your head.

*She kisses him*

This kiss, if it durst speak,  
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:  
Fare thee well.

**EDMUND**

Yours in the ranks of death.

**GONERIL**

My most dear Gloucester!

*Exit EDMUND*

**OSWALD**

Madam, here comes my lord.

*Exit*

*Enter ALBANY*

**GONERIL**

I have been worth the whistle.<sup>107</sup>

**ALBANY**

O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face.

**GONERIL**

No more.

---

<sup>107</sup> I have been worth the whistle: there is a proverb that says, "It is a poor dog that is not worth the whistle."



**ALBANY**

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:  
 What have you done?  
 Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?  
 A father, and a gracious aged man,  
 Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would lick,  
 Have you madded<sup>108</sup>.

**GONERIL**

Milk-livered man!  
 That bearest a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;  
 Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
 Thine honor from thy suffering; Where's thy drum?  
 France spreads his banners in our noiseless land;  
 With plumed helm thy slayer begins threats;  
 Whiles thou, a moral fool, sittest still, and criest  
 'Alack, why does he so?'

**ALBANY**

See thyself, devil!  
 Proper deformity seems not in the fiend  
 So horrid as in woman.

**GONERIL**

O vain fool!

**ALBANY**

Were it my fitness  
 To let these hands obey my blood,  
 They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
 Thy flesh and bones: however thou art a fiend,  
 A woman's shape doth shield thee.

*Enter a Messenger*

**ALBANY**

What news?

**Messenger**

O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead:  
 Slain by his servant, going to put out  
 The other eye of Gloucester.

**ALBANY**

Gloucester's eye!

**Messenger**

A servant opposed against the act, Flew on him, and amongst them felled him dead.

**ALBANY**

This shows you are above,  
 You justicers, that these our nether crimes

---

<sup>108</sup> Madded: made mad



So speedily can venge! But, O poor Gloucester!  
Lost he his other eye?

**Messenger**

Both, both, my lord.

This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;  
It is from your sister.

*Goneril takes the letter and exits*

**ALBANY**

Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

**Messenger**

Come with my lady hither.

**ALBANY**

He is not here.

**Messenger**

No, my good lord; I met him back again.

**ALBANY**

Knows he the wickedness?

**Messenger**

Ay, my good lord; 'twas he informed against him;  
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

**ALBANY**

Gloucester, I live

To thank thee for the love thou showedst the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:  
Tell me what more thou knowest.

*Exeunt*

### **SCENE 3: The French camp near Dover.**

*Enter KENT and a Gentleman*

**KENT**

Did your letters pierce the queen to any demonstration of grief?

**Gentleman**

Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence;  
And now and then an ample tear trilled down  
Her delicate cheek.

**KENT**

O, then it moved her.

**Gentleman**



Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove  
 Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
 Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears  
 Were like a better way: those happy smiles,  
 That played on her ripe lip, seemed not to know  
 What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence,  
 As pearls from diamonds dropped.

**KENT**

Made she no verbal question?

**Gentleman**

'Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of 'father'  
 Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart:  
 Cried 'Sisters! Sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters!  
 Kent! Father! Sisters! What, in the storm? In the night?  
 Let pity not be believed!' There she shook  
 The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
 then away she started to deal with grief alone.

**KENT**

It is the stars,  
 The stars above us, govern our conditions;  
 Else one self mate and mate could not beget  
 Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

**Gentleman**

No.

**KENT**

Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's in the town;  
 Who sometime, in his better tune, remembers  
 What we are come about, and by no means  
 Will yield to see his daughter.

**Gentleman**

Why, good sir?

**KENT**

A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness,  
 That stripped her from his benediction<sup>109</sup>, gave her dear rights  
 To his dog-hearted daughters, these things sting  
 His mind so venomously, that burning shame  
 Detains him from Cordelia.

**Gentleman**

Alack, poor gentleman!

**KENT**

Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

**Gentleman**

It is so, they are afoot.

**KENT**

---

<sup>109</sup> Benediction: blessing

Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,  
And leave you to attend him.

*Exeunt*

#### **SCENE 4: A tent at the French camp near Dover.**

*Enter, with drum and colors, CORDELIA, Doctor and Soldiers*

#### **CORDELIA**

Alack, 'tis he: why, he was met even now  
As mad as the vexed sea; singing aloud;  
Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,  
With bur-docks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,  
Darnel<sup>110</sup>, and all the idle weeds that grow  
In our sustaining corn. A century<sup>111</sup> send forth;  
Search every acre in the high-grown field,  
And bring him to our eye.

*Exit an Officer*

What can man's wisdom  
In the restoring his bereaved sense?  
He that helps him take all my outward worth.

*Enter a Messenger*

#### **Messenger**

News, madam;  
The British powers are marching hitherward.

#### **CORDELIA**

It is known before; our preparation stands  
In expectation of them. O dear father,  
It is thy business that I go about;  
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,  
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:  
Soon may I hear and see him!

*Exeunt*

#### **SCENE 5: Gloucester's castle.**

---

<sup>110</sup> These are all types of weeds

<sup>111</sup> Century: 100 soldiers



*Enter REGAN and OSWALD*

**REGAN**

But are my brother's powers set forth?

**OSWALD**

Ay, madam.

**REGAN**

Himself in person there?

**OSWALD**

Madam, with much ado:

Your sister is the better soldier.

**REGAN**

Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

**OSWALD**

No, madam.

**REGAN**

What might import my sister's letter to him?<sup>112</sup>

**OSWALD**

I know not, lady.

**REGAN**

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,

To let him live: where he arrives he moves

All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,

In pity of his misery, to dispatch

His nighted<sup>113</sup> life: moreover, to descry<sup>114</sup>

The strength of the enemy.

**OSWALD**

I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.

**REGAN**

Our troops set forth to-morrow: stay with us;

The ways are dangerous.

**OSWALD**

I may not, madam:

My lady charged my duty in this business.

**REGAN**

Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you

Transport her purposes by word?

Let me unseal the letter.

**OSWALD**

Madam, I had rather--

**REGAN**

<sup>112</sup> What might import my sister's letter to him: What could my sister's letter say?

<sup>113</sup> Knighted: blind

<sup>114</sup> Descry: see



I know your lady does not love her husband,  
 I am sure of that: and at her late being here  
 She gave strange eillades<sup>115</sup> to noble Edmund.  
 I know you are of her bosom<sup>116</sup>.

**OSWALD**

I, madam?

**REGAN**

I speak in understanding; you are; I know it:  
 Therefore I do advise you, take this note:  
 My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talked;  
 And more convenient is he for my hand  
 Than for your lady's.  
 If you do find him, pray you, give him this;  
 And when your mistress hears thus much from you,  
 I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.  
 So, fare you well.  
 If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,  
 Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

**OSWALD**

Would I could meet him, madam! I should show  
 What party I do follow.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE 6: Fields near Dover.**

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant*

**GLOUCESTER**

When shall we come to the top of that same hill?

**EDGAR**

You do climb up it now: look, how we labor.

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks the ground is even.

**EDGAR**

Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

**GLOUCESTER**

No, truly.

**EDGAR**

Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect  
 By your eyes' anguish.

---

<sup>115</sup> Oeillades: loving looks

<sup>116</sup> Of her bosom: know her heart



Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful  
 And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!  
 The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,  
 Appear like mice, almost too small for sight:  
 The murmuring surge,  
 That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes,  
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;  
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight  
 Topple down headlong.

**GLOUCESTER**

Set me where you stand.

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand: you are now within a foot  
 Of the extreme verge.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let go my hand.

Here, friend, is another purse; in it a jewel  
 Well worth a poor man's taking.

Go thou farther off;

Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

**EDGAR**

Now fare you well, good sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

With all my heart.

**EDGAR**

[Aside] Why I do trifle thus with his despair  
 Is done to cure it.

**GLOUCESTER**

[Kneeling] O you mighty gods!

This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,  
 Shake patiently my great affliction off:

If Edgar live, O, bless him!

Now, fellow, fare thee well.

*He falls forward*

**EDGAR**

Alive or dead?

Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!

Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.

What are you, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Away, and let me die.

**EDGAR**

Ten masts at each make not the altitude



Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:  
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

**GLOUCESTER**

But have I fallen, or no?

**EDGAR**

From the dread summit of this chalky bourn<sup>117</sup>.  
Look up a-height; do but look up.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, I have no eyes.

Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,  
To end itself by death?

**EDGAR**

Give me your arm:

Up: so. How is it? Feel you your legs? You stand.

**GLOUCESTER**

Too well, too well.

**EDGAR**

This is above all strangeness.

Upon the crown of the cliff, what thing was that  
Which parted from you?

**GLOUCESTER**

A poor unfortunate beggar.

**EDGAR**

As I stood here below, methought his eyes  
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,  
Horns whelked<sup>118</sup> and waved like the enridged sea:  
It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,  
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honors  
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear  
Affliction till it do cry out itself  
'Enough, enough,' and die. That thing you speak of,  
I took it for a man; often it would say  
'The fiend, the fiend:' he led me to that place.

**EDGAR**

Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

*Enter KING LEAR, dressed with wild flowers*

**KING LEAR**

No, they cannot touch me for coining<sup>119</sup>; I am the king himself.

<sup>117</sup> Bourn: cliff

<sup>118</sup> Whelked: twisted

<sup>119</sup> Coining: counterfeiting



**EDGAR**

O thou side-piercing sight!

**GLOUCESTER**

I know that voice.

**KING LEAR**

Ha! Goneril, with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog; and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say 'ay' and 'no' to every thing that I said! When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found them, there I smelt them out. Go to, they are not men of their words: they told me I was every thing; it is a lie, I am not ague-proof.<sup>120</sup>

**GLOUCESTER**

The trick of that voice I do well remember:

Is it not the king?

**KING LEAR**

Ay, every inch a king:

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

I pardon that man's life.

**GLOUCESTER**

O, let me kiss that hand!

**KING LEAR**

Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

**GLOUCESTER**

O ruined piece of nature! This great world

Shall so wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

**KING LEAR**

I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squint at me? Read thou this challenge; mark but the penning of it.

**GLOUCESTER**

Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.

**EDGAR**

I would not take this from report;

My heart breaks at it.

**KING LEAR**

Read.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, with the case of eyes?

**KING LEAR**

O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Yet you see how this world goes.

**GLOUCESTER**

I see it feelingly.

**KING LEAR**

What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears. Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

---

<sup>120</sup> Ague-proof: immune to chills and fever



**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, sir.

**KING LEAR**

And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.

**EDGAR**

O, matter and impertinency mixed! Reason in madness!

**KING LEAR**

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:

Thou knowest, the first time that we smell the air,

We bawl and cry.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, alack the day!

**KING LEAR**

When we are born, we cry that we are come

To this great stage of fools. I'll put it in proof:<sup>121</sup>

And when I have stolen upon these sons-in-law,

Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

*Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants*

**Gentleman**

O, here he is: lay hand upon him. Sir,

Your most dear daughter--

**KING LEAR**

No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even

The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;

You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons;

I am cut to the brains.

**Gentleman**

You shall have any thing.

**KING LEAR**

No seconds<sup>122</sup>? All myself?

Why, this would make a man a man of salt<sup>123</sup>,

To use his eyes for garden water-pots,

Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

**Gentleman**

Good sir,--

**KING LEAR**

<sup>121</sup> Put it in proof: put it to the test

<sup>122</sup> Seconds: attendants

<sup>123</sup> Salt: refers to tears



I will die bravely, like a bridegroom. What!  
I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king;  
My masters, know you that.

**Gentleman**

You are a royal one, and we obey you.

**KING LEAR**

Then there's life in it. Nay, if you get it, you shall get it with running.

*Exit running; Attendants follow*

**Gentleman**

A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,  
Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter,  
Who redeems nature from the general curse  
Which twain have brought her to.

**EDGAR**

Hail, gentle sir.

**Gentleman**

Sir, speed you: what's your will?

**EDGAR**

Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?

**Gentleman**

Most sure and vulgar: every one hears that,  
Which can distinguish sound.

**EDGAR**

But, by your favor,

How near's the other army?

**Gentleman**

Near and on speedy foot.

**EDGAR**

I thank you, sir: that's all.

**Gentleman**

Though that the queen on special cause is here,  
Her army is moved on.

**EDGAR**

I thank you, sir.

*Exit Gentleman*

**GLOUCESTER**

You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me:  
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again  
To die before you please!

**EDGAR**

Well pray you, father.



**GLOUCESTER**

Now, good sir, what are you?

**EDGAR**

A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows;  
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,  
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,  
I'll lead you to some biding.

**GLOUCESTER**

Hearty thanks:  
The bounty and the benison of heaven  
To boot, and boot!

*Enter OSWALD*

**OSWALD**

A proclaimed prize! Most happy!  
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh  
To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,  
Briefly thyself remember: the sword is out  
That must destroy thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

Now let thy friendly<sup>124</sup> hand  
Put strength enough to it.

*EDGAR interposes*

**OSWALD**

Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Darest thou support a published traitor? Hence;  
Lest that the infection of his fortune take  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

**EDGAR**

I'll not let go, sir, without further occasion.

**OSWALD**

Let go, slave, or thou diest!

**EDGAR**

Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor folk pass.  
Nay, come not near the old man.

**OSWALD**

Out, dunghill!

**EDGAR**

I'll pick your teeth, sir: come; no matter for your foins.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Friendly: fortunate

<sup>125</sup> Foins: sword thrusts



*They fight, and EDGAR knocks him down*

**OSWALD**

Slave, thou hast slain me: villain, take my purse:  
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body;  
And give the letters which thou findest about me  
To Edmund earl of Gloucester O, untimely death!

*Dies*

**EDGAR**

I know thee well: a serviceable villain.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, is he dead?

**EDGAR**

Sit you down, father; rest you  
Let's see these pockets: the letters that he speaks of  
May be my friends.

*Reads*

'Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labor. Your--wife, so I would say--Affectionate servant, GONERIL.'

O indistinguished<sup>126</sup> space of woman's will!  
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;  
And the exchange my brother! Here, in the sands,  
Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified  
Of murderous lechers.

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is mad: better I were distract:<sup>127</sup>  
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,  
And woes by wrong imaginations<sup>128</sup> lose  
The knowledge of themselves.

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand:

*Drums far off*

<sup>126</sup> Indistinguished: boundless

<sup>127</sup> Distract: mad

<sup>128</sup> Wrong imaginations: delusions



Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum:  
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE 7: A tent in the French camp. KING LEAR on a bed asleep.**

*Soft music playing; Gentleman and others attending.*

*Enter CORDELIA, KENT, and Doctor*

**CORDELIA**

O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,  
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,  
And every measure fail me.

**KENT**

To be acknowledged, madam, is overpaid.

**CORDELIA**

Be better suited:  
These weeds<sup>129</sup> are memories of those worser hours:  
I prithee, put them off.

**KENT**

Pardon me, dear madam;  
Yet to be known shortens my made intent:  
My boon<sup>130</sup> I make it, that you know me not  
Till time and I think meet.

**CORDELIA**

Then be it so, my good lord.

*To the Doctor*

How does the king?

**Doctor**

Madam, sleeps still.

**CORDELIA**

O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!

**Doctor**

So please your majesty  
That we may wake the king: he hath slept long.

**CORDELIA**

---

<sup>129</sup> Weeds: clothes

<sup>130</sup> Boon: bonus



Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed  
In the sway of your own will. Is he arrayed<sup>131</sup>?

**Gentleman**

Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep  
We put fresh garments on him.

**Doctor**

Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;  
I doubt not of his temperance.

**CORDELIA**

Very well.

**Doctor**

Please you, draw near. Louder the music there!

**CORDELIA**

O my dear father! Restoration hang  
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss  
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
Have in thy reverence made!

**KENT**

Kind and dear princess!

**CORDELIA**

Had you not been their father, these white flakes<sup>132</sup>  
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face  
To be opposed against the warring winds?  
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?  
In the most terrible and nimble stroke  
Of quick, cross lightning? Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire. Alack, alack!  
It is wonder that thy life and wits at once  
Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him.

**Doctor**

Madam, do you; it is fittest.

**CORDELIA**

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

**KING LEAR**

You do me wrong to take me out of the grave:  
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound  
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
Do scald like molten lead.

**CORDELIA**

Sir, do you know me?

**KING LEAR**

You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

---

<sup>131</sup> Arrayed: dressed

<sup>132</sup> Flakes: hairs



**CORDELIA**

Still, still, far wide<sup>133</sup>!

**Doctor**

He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

**KING LEAR**

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

I know not what to say.

I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;

I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured of my condition!

**CORDELIA**

O, look upon me, sir,

And hold your hands in benediction over me:

No, sir, you must not kneel.

**KING LEAR**

Pray, do not mock me:

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;

And, to deal plainly,

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks I should know you, and know this man;

Yet I am doubtful for I am mainly ignorant

What place this is; and all the skill I have

Remembers not these garments; nor I know not

Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;

For, as I am a man, I think this lady

To be my child Cordelia.

**CORDELIA**

And so I am, I am.

**KING LEAR**

Be your tears wet? I pray, weep not:

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me; for your sisters

Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:

You have some cause, they have not.

**CORDELIA**

No cause, no cause.

**KING LEAR**

Am I in France?

**KENT**

In your own kingdom, sir.

**KING LEAR**

Do not abuse me.

**Doctor**

Trouble him no more till further settling.

---

<sup>133</sup> Wide: deluded



**CORDELIA**

Will it please your highness walk?

**KING LEAR**

You must bear with me:

Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

*Exeunt*

**ACT 5****SCENE 1: The British camp, near Dover.**

*Enter, with drum and colors, EDMUND, REGAN, Gentlemen, and Soldiers.*

**REGAN**

Now, sweet lord,

You know the goodness I intend upon you:

Tell me--but truly--but then speak the truth,

Do you not love my sister?

**EDMUND**

In honored<sup>134</sup> love.

**REGAN**

I never shall endure her: dear my lord,

Be not familiar with her.

**EDMUND**

Fear me not:

She and the duke her husband!

*Enter, with drum and colors, ALBANY, GONERIL, and Soldiers*

**GONERIL**

[Aside] I had rather lose the battle than that sister

Should loosen him and me.

**ALBANY**

Our very loving sister, well be-met.

Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter,

With others whom the rigor<sup>135</sup> of our state

Forced to cry out.

**REGAN**

Why is this reasoned<sup>136</sup>?

**GONERIL**


---

<sup>134</sup> Honored: honorable

<sup>135</sup> Rigor: harshness

<sup>136</sup> Reasoned: being discussed



Combine together against the enemy;  
For these domestic and particular broils  
Are not the question here.

**ALBANY**

Let's then determine  
With the ancient<sup>137</sup> of war on our proceedings.

**EDMUND**

I shall attend you presently at your tent.

**REGAN**

Sister, you'll go with us?

**GONERIL**

No.

**REGAN**

It is most convenient; pray you, go with us.

**GONERIL**

[Aside] O, ho, I know the riddle.--I will go.

*As they all go out, enter EDGAR disguised*

**EDGAR**

If ever your grace had speech with man so poor,  
Hear me one word.

**ALBANY**

Speak.

**EDGAR**

Before you fight the battle, open this letter.  
Fortune love you.

**ALBANY**

Stay till I have read the letter.

**EDGAR**

I was forbid it.  
When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,  
And I'll appear again.

**ALBANY**

Why, fare thee well: I will overlook thy paper.

*Exit EDGAR*

*Re-enter EDMUND*

**EDMUND**

The enemy's in view; draw up your powers.

**ALBANY**

We will greet the time.

---

<sup>137</sup> Ancient: officers



*Exit*

**EDMUND**

To both these sisters have I sworn my love;  
Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoyed,  
If both remain alive: to take the widow  
Makes mad her sister Goneril;  
And hardly shall I carry out my side,  
Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use  
His countenance for the battle; which being done,  
Let her who would be rid of him devise  
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy  
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,  
The battle done, and they within our power,  
Shall never see his pardon; for my state  
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

*Exit*

**SCENE 2: A field between the two camps.**

*Enter EDGAR and GLOUCESTER*

**EDGAR**

Here, father, take the shadow of this tree  
For your good host; pray that the right may thrive:  
If ever I return to you again,  
I'll bring you comfort.

**GLOUCESTER**

Grace go with you, sir!

*Exit EDGAR*

*Alarum and retreat offstage. Re-enter EDGAR*

**EDGAR**

Away, old man; give me thy hand; away!  
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter taken:  
Give me thy hand; come on.

**GLOUCESTER**

No farther, sir; a man may rot even here.

**EDGAR**



What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure  
 Their going hence, even as their coming hither;  
 Ripeness is all: come on.

*Exeunt*

### **SCENE 3: The British camp near Dover.**

*Enter with drum and colors, EDMUND, Captain, and Soldiers; KING LEAR and CORDELIA are his prisoners.*

**EDMUND**

Some officers take them away.

**CORDELIA**

We are not the first

Who, with best meaning, have incurred the worst.  
 Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

**KING LEAR**

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:  
 We two alone will sing like birds in the cage:  
 When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,  
 And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,  
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,  
 Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;  
 And take upon us the mystery of things,  
 As if we were God's spies.

**EDMUND**

Take them away.

**KING LEAR**

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
 Wipe thine eyes; the good-years shall devour them, flesh and fell<sup>138</sup>,  
 Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see them starve first.  
 Come.

*Exeunt KING LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded*

**EDMUND**

Come hither, captain; hark.  
 Take thou this note;

*Giving a paper*

---

<sup>138</sup> Fell: skin



Go follow them to prison:  
 Know thou this, that men are as the time is:  
 To be tender-minded does not become a sword:  
 Either say thou wilt do it, or thrive by other means.

**Captain**

I'll do it, my lord.

**EDMUND**

About it; and write happy when thou hast done.

*Captain exits*

*Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, another Captain, and Soldiers*

**ALBANY**

Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,  
 And fortune led you well: you have the captives  
 That were the opposites of this day's strife:  
 We do require them of you.

**EDMUND**

Sir, I thought it fit  
 To send the old and miserable king  
 To some retention<sup>139</sup> and appointed guard;  
 With him I sent the queen;  
 My reason all the same; and they are ready  
 To-morrow, or at further space, to appear  
 Where you shall hold your session.

**ALBANY**

Sir, by your patience,  
 I hold you but a subject of this war,  
 Not as a brother.

**REGAN**

That's as we list<sup>140</sup> to grace him.  
 He led our powers;  
 Bore the commission of my place and person;  
 The which immediacy<sup>141</sup> may well stand up,  
 And call itself your brother.

**GONERIL**

In his own grace he doth exalt himself,  
 More than in your addition.

**REGAN**

Lady, I am not well; else I should answer  
 From a full-flowing stomach.

<sup>139</sup> Retention: confinement

<sup>140</sup> List: choose

<sup>141</sup> Immediacy: connection to me



[To EDMUND] Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine.

**ALBANY**

Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee  
On capital treason; and, in this gilded serpent

*Pointing to Goneril*

For your claim, fair sister,  
I bar it in the interest of my wife.  
Thou art armed, Gloucester: let the trumpet sound:  
If none appear to prove upon thy head  
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
There is my pledge;

*Throwing down a glove*

I'll prove it on thy heart,  
Thou art in nothing less  
Than I have here proclaimed thee.

**REGAN**

Sick, O, sick!

**GONERIL**

[Aside] If not, I'll never trust medicine.

**EDMUND**

There's my exchange:

*Throwing down a glove*

What in the world he is  
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies:  
Call by thy trumpet: I will maintain  
My truth and honor firmly.

**ALBANY**

A herald, ho!

**EDMUND**

A herald, ho, a herald!

**REGAN**

My sickness grows upon me.

**ALBANY**

She is not well; convey her to my tent.

*Exit Regan, led by a servant*

*Enter a Herald*



Come hither, herald,--Let the trumpet sound,  
And read out this.

**Captain**

Sound, trumpet!

*A trumpet sounds*

**Herald**

[Reads] 'If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defense.'

**EDMUND**

Sound!

*First trumpet*

**Herald**

Again!

*Second trumpet*

**Herald**

Again!

*Third trumpet*

*Enter EDGAR, at the third sound, armed*

**ALBANY**

Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
Upon this call of the trumpet.

**Herald**

What are you?

Your name, your quality? And why you answer

This present summons?

**EDGAR**

Know, my name is lost;

By treason's tooth bare-gnawn<sup>142</sup> and canker-bit<sup>143</sup>:

Yet am I noble as the adversary

I come to cope<sup>144</sup>.

**ALBANY**

Which is that adversary?

<sup>142</sup> Bare-gnawn: chewed bare

<sup>143</sup> Canker-bit: destroyed by sores

<sup>144</sup> Cope: encounter



**EDGAR**

What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester?

**EDMUND**

Himself: what sayest thou to him?

**EDGAR**

Draw thy sword,

That, if my speech offend a noble heart,

Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.

This sword, this arm, and my best spirits, are bent

To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,

Thou liest.

*They fight. EDMUND falls*

**ALBANY**

Save him, save him!

*To Edgar*

Hold, sir:

*To Edmund*

Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil:

*To Goneril*

No tearing, lady: I perceive you know it.

*Gives the letter to EDMUND*

**GONERIL**

Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:

Who can arraign me for it?

**ALBANY**

Most monstrous! oh!

Knowest thou this paper?

**GONERIL**

Ask me not what I know.

*Exit*

**ALBANY**

Go after her: she's desperate; govern her.

**EDMUND**

What you have charged me with, that have I done;  
And more, much more; the time will bring it out:  
It is past, and so am I. But what art thou  
That hast this fortune on me?

**EDGAR**

Let's exchange charity.  
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;  
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.

**EDMUND**

Thou hast spoken right, 'tis true.

**ALBANY**

Methought thy very gait did prophesy  
A royal nobleness: I must embrace thee:  
Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I  
Did hate thee or thy father!

**EDGAR**

Worthy prince, I know it.

**ALBANY**

Where have you hid yourself?  
How have you known the miseries of your father?

**EDGAR**

By nursing them, my lord. The bloody proclamation to escape,  
That followed me so near taught me to shift  
Into a madman's rags; to assume a semblance  
That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit  
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,  
Their precious stones new lost: became his guide,  
Led him, begged for him, saved him from despair;  
Never revealed myself unto him,  
Until some half-hour past, when I was armed:  
Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,  
I asked his blessing, and from first to last  
Told him my pilgrimage: but his flawed heart,  
Alack, too weak the conflict to support!  
Betwixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
Burst smilingly.

**EDMUND**

This speech of yours hath moved me,  
And shall perchance do good: but speak you on;  
You look as you had something more to say.

**ALBANY**

If there be more, more woeful, hold it in;  
For I am almost ready to dissolve,  
Hearing of this.



*Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife*

**Gentleman**

Help, help, O, help!

**EDGAR**

What means that bloody knife?

**Gentleman**

It is hot, it smokes;

It came even from the heart of--O, she's dead!

**ALBANY**

Who dead? Speak, man.

**Gentleman**

Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister

By her is poisoned; she hath confessed it.

**ALBANY**

Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead:

This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,

Touches us not with pity.

*Exit Gentleman*

*Enter KENT*

O, is this he?

The time will not allow the compliment

Which very manners urges.

**KENT**

I am come

To bid my king and master aye good night:

Is he not here?

**ALBANY**

Great thing of us forgot!

Speak, Edmund, where's the king? And where's Cordelia?

Seest thou this object, Kent?

*The bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in*

**KENT**

Alack, why thus?

**EDMUND**

The one the other poisoned for my sake,

And after slew herself.

**ALBANY**

Even so. Cover their faces.

**EDMUND**



I pant for life: some good I mean to do,  
 Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send  
 To the castle; for my writ<sup>145</sup>  
 Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:  
 Nay, send in time.

**ALBANY**

Run, run, O, run!

*Exit EDGAR*

**EDMUND**

The captain hath commission from thy wife and me  
 To hang Cordelia in the prison, and  
 To lay the blame upon her own despair,  
 That she fordid herself<sup>146</sup>.

**ALBANY**

The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

*EDMUND is carried off*

*Re-enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR, Captain, and others following*

**KING LEAR**

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:  
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I would use them so  
 That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!  
 I know when one is dead, and when one lives;  
 She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;  
 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
 Why, then she lives.

**KENT**

Is this the promised end?

**KING LEAR**

This feather stirs; she lives! if it be so,  
 It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
 That ever I have felt.

**KENT**

[Kneeling] O my good master!

**KING LEAR**

Prithee, away.

**EDGAR**

It is noble Kent, your friend.

---

<sup>145</sup> Writ: written order

<sup>146</sup> Fordid herself: committed suicide



**KING LEAR**

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
 I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!  
 Cordelia, Cordelia! Stay a little.  
 I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

**Captain**

It is true, my lords, he did.

**KING LEAR**

Who are you? Are you not Kent?

**KENT**

The same, your servant Kent  
 That, from your first of difference and decay,  
 Have followed your sad steps.

**KING LEAR**

You are welcome hither.

**KENT**

Nor no man else: all's cheerless, dark, and deadly.  
 Your eldest daughters have fordone them selves,  
 And desperately are dead.

*Enter a Captain*

**Captain**

Edmund is dead, my lord.

**ALBANY**

That's but a trifle here.  
 You lords and noble friends, know our intent.  
 What comfort to this great decay may come  
 Shall be applied: for us we will resign,  
 During the life of this old majesty,  
 To him our absolute power:

*To EDGAR and KENT*

You, to your rights:  
 With boot<sup>147</sup>, and such addition as your honors  
 Have more than merited. All friends shall taste  
 The wages of their virtue, and all foes  
 The cup of their deservings.

**KING LEAR**

And my poor fool is hanged! No, no, no life!  
 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
 And thou no breath at all? Thou wilt come no more,

---

<sup>147</sup> Boot: advantage



Never, never, never, never, never!

*Dies*

**EDGAR**

He faints! My lord, my lord!

**KENT**

Break, heart; I prithee, break!

**EDGAR**

Look up, my lord.

**KENT**

Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! Ge hates him much  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer.

**EDGAR**

He is gone, indeed.

**KENT**

The wonder is, he hath endured so long.

**ALBANY**

Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is general woe.

*To KENT and EDGAR*

Friends of my soul, you twain<sup>148</sup>  
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

**KENT**

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;  
My master calls me, I must not say no.

**ALBANY**

The weight of this sad time we must obey;  
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.  
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young  
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

*Exeunt*

---

<sup>148</sup> Twain: two

