

SCENE 1

King Lear, 1.2.52-119

GLOUCESTER (*reads*): *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 enjoy half his revenue forever and live the beloved of your brother.*
Edgar.

Hum? Conspiracy? “Sleep till I wake him, you should enjoy half his revenue.” My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in?—When came you to this? 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.

GLOUCESTER: You know the character to be your brother’s?

EDMUND: If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

GLOUCESTER: It is his.

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

GLOUCESTER: Has he never before sounded you in this business?

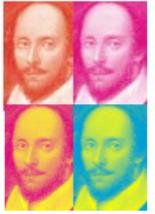
EDMUND: Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age and fathers declined, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

GLOUCESTER: O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter. Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than brutish!—Go, sirrah, seek him. I’ll apprehend him.—Abominable villain!—Where is he?

EDMUND: I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honor and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your Honor, and to no other pretense of danger.

GLOUCESTER: Think you so?

EDMUND: If your Honor judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening.



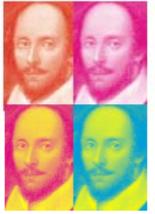
GLOUCESTER: He cannot be such a monster.

EDMUND: Nor is not, sure.

GLOUCESTER: To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him! Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you. Frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution.

EDMUND: I will seek him, sir, presently, convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

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. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction: there's son against father. The King falls from bias of nature: there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time.



SCENE 2: *King Lear* 2.4.234-304

REGAN

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If till the expiration of your month
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me.
I am now from home and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

LEAR

Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?
No! Rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' th' air,
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,
Necessity's sharp pinch. Return with her?
Why the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest born—I could as well be brought
To knee his throne and, squire-like, pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom. [*He indicates Oswald.*]

GONERIL

At your choice, sir.

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 or embossed carbuncle
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee.
Let shame come when it will; I do not call it.
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.
Mend when thou canst. Be better at thy leisure.
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,
For those that mingle reason with your passion
Must be content to think you old, and so—
But she knows what she does.

