

# KING LEAR

## THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

By William Shakespeare

### CAST

LEAR, King of Britain  
FOOL, Lear's jester

GONERIL, Lear's eldest daughter  
ALBANY, Duke of Albany, Goneril's husband  
OSWALD, her steward

REGAN, Lear's second daughter  
CORNWALL, Duke of Cornwall, Regan's husband  
SERVANTS to Cornwall 1st, 2nd, & 3rd

CORDELIA, Lear's youngest daughter  
FRANCE, King of France

BURGUNDY, Duke of Burgundy

Suitors to Cordelia DOCTOR, attending on Cordelia  
1st GENTLEMAN, attending on Cordelia

GLOUCESTER Earl of Gloucester  
EDGAR, his son, later disguised as Poor Tom  
EDMUND, his bastard son

CAPTAIN, employed by Edmund

CURAN, a courtier of Gloucester's household  
OLD MAN, a tenant of Gloucester's estate

KENT, Earl of Kent, later disguised as Caius

HERALD  
MESSENGER

KNIGHT, and others of Lear's court

Officers, Soldiers, Drummers, Standard Bearers,  
Trumpeters, Servants and Attendants

Scene: Britain.

# ACT 1.

## SCENE 1. A State Room in King Lear's Palace.

**Enter** KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND.

Kent                    I thought the king had more affected 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, for qualities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

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't.

Kent                    I cannot conceive you.

Gloucester            Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-womb'd and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

Kent                    I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

Gloucester            But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

Edmund                No, my lord.

Gloucester            My Lord of Kent. Remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

Edmund                My services to your lordship.

Kent                    I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edmund                Sir, I shall study deserving.

Gloucester            He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. The king is coming.

Sound a Sennet.

                                  Enter One bearing a coronet, then enter KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and ATTENDANTS.

Lear                    Attend the Lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

Gloucester            I shall, my liege.

**Exeunt** GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.

Lear                    Meantime we 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 -  
Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
Interest of territory, cares of state -

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Which of you shall we say doth love us most,  
That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge? Goneril,  
Our eldest born, speak first.

- Goneril Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;  
Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty;  
Beyond what can be valued rich or rare;  
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;  
As much as child e'er 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 speak? Love, and be silent.
- Lear Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,  
With shadowy forests and with champains riched,  
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,  
We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issues  
Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,  
Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall?
- Regan I am made of that self mettle 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,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness' love.
- Cordelia [Aside] Then poor Cordelia!  
And yet not so; since I am sure my love's  
More ponderous than my tongue.
- 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.  
[To CORDELIA] Now, our joy,  
Although our last and least, to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interested; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
- Cordelia Nothing, my lord.
- Lear Nothing?
- Cordelia Nothing.
- 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; no more nor less.
- Lear How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little,  
Lest you 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 honour you.  
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
They love you all? Haply when I shall wed,  
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry  
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.  
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,  
To love my father all.
- Lear But goes thy heart with this?

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Cordelia Ay, my good lord.

Lear So young, and so untender?

Cordelia So young, my lord, and true.

Lear Let it be so. Thy truth then be thy dower!  
 For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
 The mysteries of Hecat and the night,  
 By all the operation of the orbs  
 From whom we do exist and cease to be,  
 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
 Propinquity and property of blood,  
 And as a stranger to my heart and me  
 Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,  
 Or he that makes his generation messes  
 To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom  
 Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved,  
 As thou my sometime daughter.

Kent Good my liege -

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.  
 [To CORDELIA] Hence, and avoid my sight!  
 So be my grave my peace as here I give  
 Her father's heart from her. Call France. Who stirs?  
 Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,  
 With my two daughters' dowers digest the third.  
 Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.  
 I do invest you jointly with my power,  
 Pre-eminence, and all the large effects  
 That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly course,  
 With reservation of a hundred knights  
 By you to be sustained, shall our abode  
 Make with you by due turn. Only we shall retain  
 The name and all th'addition to a king; the sway,  
 Revenue, execution of the rest,  
 Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,  
 This coronet part between you.

Kent Royal Lear,  
 Whom I have ever honoured as my king,  
 Loved as my father, as my master followed,  
 As my great patron thought on in my prayers -

Lear The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.

Kent Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
 The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly  
 When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?  
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak  
 When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound  
 When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,  
 And in thy best consideration check  
 This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,  
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,  
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds  
 Reverb no hollowness.

Lear Kent, on thy life, no more!

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

Lear Out of my sight!

Kent See better, Lear; and let me still remain

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The true blank of thine eye.

Lear Now, by Apollo -

Kent Now, by Apollo, king,  
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear O, vassal, miscreant!  
[Laying his hand upon his sword.  
Albany &  
Cornwall Dear sir, forbear.

Kent Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,  
Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat  
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear Hear me, recreant;  
On thine allegiance, hear me!  
That thou hast sought to make us break our vow,  
Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride  
To come betwixt 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 disasters 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! By Jupiter,  
This shall not be revoked.

Kent Fare thee well, king; sith thus thou wilt appear,  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.  
[To CORDELIA]  
The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,  
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!  
[To GONERIL and REGAN]  
And your large speeches may your deeds approve,  
That good effects may spring from words of love.  
Thus Kent, O Princes, bids you all adieu;  
He'll shape his old course in a country new.

**Exit**

[Flourish]

Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with FRANCE, BURGUNDY, and ATTENDANTS.

Gloucester Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear My Lord of Burgundy,  
We first address toward 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 hath your highness offered,  
Nor will you tender less.

Lear Right noble Burgundy,  
When she was dear to us we did hold her so,  
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.  
If aught within that little-seeming substance,  
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,  
And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,  
She's there, and she is yours.

Burgundy I know no answer.

Lear Will you with those infirmities she owes,  
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath,  
Take her or leave her?

- Burgundy Pardon me, royal sir,  
Election makes not up in such conditions.
- Lear Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that made me,  
I tell you all her wealth.  
[To FRANCE] For you, great king,  
I would not from your love make such a stray  
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
T'avert your liking a more worthier way  
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed  
Almost t'acknowledge hers.
- France This is most strange:  
That she, whom even but now was your best object,  
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time  
Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle  
So many folds of favour. Sure her offence  
Must be of such unnatural degree  
That monsters it, or your fore-vouched affection  
Fall into taint; which to believe of her  
Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
Should never plant in me.
- Cordelia I yet beseech your majesty -  
If for I want that glib and oily art  
To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend  
I'll do't before I speak - that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,  
No unchaste action or dishonoured step  
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour,  
But even for want of that for which I am richer:  
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
Hath lost me in your liking.
- Lear Better thou  
Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better.
- France Is it but this: a tardiness in nature,  
Which often leaves the history unspoke  
That it intends to do? My Lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stands  
Aloof from th'entire point. Will you have her?  
She is herself a dowry.
- Burgundy Royal king,  
Give but that portion which yourself proposed,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.
- Lear Nothing! I have sworn; I am firm.
- Burgundy I am sorry, then, you have so lost a father  
That you must lose a husband.
- Cordelia Peace be with Burgundy.  
Since that respect and fortunes are his love,  
I shall not be his wife.
- 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! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st neglect  
My love should kindle to inflamed respect.  
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.  
Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy  
Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.  
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind.  
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

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.  
Come, noble Burgundy.  
[Flourish]

**Exeunt** LEAR, BURGUNDY, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GLOUCESTER, and ATTENDANTS.

France                Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cordelia             The jewels of our father, with washed eyes  
Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are;  
And like a sister am most loath to call  
Your faults as they are named. Love 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.

Regan                Prescribe not us our duty.

Goneril              Let your study  
Be to content your lord, who hath received you  
At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,  
  
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

Cordelia             Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides,  
Who covers faults, at last with shame derides.  
Well may you prosper!

France                Come, my fair Cordelia.

**Exeunt** FRANCE and CORDELIA.

Goneril              Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both. I  
think our father will hence tonight.

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                'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

Goneril              The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look from  
his age to receive not alone the imperfections of long-engraffed condition, but  
therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with  
them.

Regan                Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banish-  
ment.

Goneril              There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you,  
let us hit together; if our father carry authority with such disposition as he bears,  
this last surrender of his will but offend us.

Regan                We shall further think of it.

Goneril              We must do something, and i'th'heat.

**Exeunt**

**Scene 2. The Earl of Gloucester's Castle.**

**Enter EDMUND** with a letter.

Edmund            Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law  
My services are bound. 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 moonshines  
Lag of a brother? Why `bastard', wherefore `base',  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With `base', with baseness, bastardy? Base, base?  
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
More composition and fierce quality  
Than doth within a dull, stale, tired bed,  
Go to th'creating a whole tribe of fops  
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,  
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.  
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund  
As to th'legitimate. Fine word `legitimate'  
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
Shall top th'legitimate. I grow, I prosper.  
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

**Enter GLOUCESTER.**

Gloucester        Kent banished thus! And France in choler painted!  
And the king gone tonight! Prescribed his power,  
Confined to exhibition! All this done  
Upon the gad! - Edmund, how now, what news?

Edmund            So please your lordship, none.  
[Putting up 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  
o'erread, and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

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        Let's see, let's see.

Edmund            I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my  
virtue.

Gloucester        [Reads] "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 enjoy half his re-  
venue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,  
EDGAR."

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Hum! Conspiracy! "Sleep till I waked 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 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 honour, 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 honour, and to no other pretence of danger.
- Gloucester       Think you so?
- Edmund           If your honour 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. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing. Do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, honesty! 'Tis strange.
- Edmund           This is the excellent foppery of the world that, when we are sick in fortune - often the surfeits of our own behaviour - we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting-on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man - to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar

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**Enter** EDGAR.

Pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam. - O, these eclipses do portend these divisions. [Sings] Fa, sol, la, mi.

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 with 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, divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles, needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

Edgar How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

Edmund When saw you my father last?

Edgar 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 nor countenance?

Edgar None at all.

Edmund Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him, and at my entreaty forbear his presence until some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

Edgar Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edmund That's my fear. I pray you have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower; and, as I say, 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. I am no honest man if there be any good meaning toward you. 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 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. A Room in the Duke of Albany's Palace.**

**Enter** GONERIL, and OSWALD her Steward.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Goneril Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his Fool?

Oswald Ay, 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. When he returns from hunting  
I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.  
If you come slack of former services  
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.  
[Horns within.  
Oswald He's coming, madam; I hear him.

Goneril Put on what weary negligence you please,  
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question.  
If he distaste it let him to my sister,  
Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,  
Not to be overruled. Idle old man,  
That still would manage those authorities  
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,  
Old fools are babes again, and must be used  
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.  
Remember what I have said.

Oswald Well, madam.

Goneril And let his knights have colder looks among you;  
What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.  
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,  
That I may speak. 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 defuse, my good intent  
May carry through itself to that full issue  
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banished Kent,  
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,  
So may it come thy master, whom thou lov'st,  
Shall find thee full of labours.

Horns within.

Enter KING LEAR, with KNIGHTS attending.

Lear Let me not stay a jot for dinner. Go, get it ready.

**Exit** a KNIGHT.

How now, what art thou?

Kent A man, sir.

Lear What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

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, and to eat no fish.

Lear What art thou?

Kent A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Lear                    If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent                    Service.

Lear                    Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent                    You.

Lear                    Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent                    No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

Lear                    What's that?

Kent                    Authority.

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.

Lear                    How old art thou?

Kent                    Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything. I have years on my back forty-eight.

Lear                    Follow me; thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no worse after dinner I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho! Dinner! Where's my knave, my Fool? Go you and call my Fool hither.

**Exit a KNIGHT.**

                                  Enter OSWALD.

                                  You! You, sirrah, where's my daughter?

Oswald                So please you.

**Exit**

Lear                    What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back.

**Exit a KNIGHT.**

                                  Where's my Fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

**Re-enter KNIGHT.**

                                  How now, where's that mongrel?

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

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

Knight                Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner he would not.

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. There's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependants as in the duke himself also and your daughter.

Lear                    Ha, sayst 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.

Lear                    Thou but rememb'rest me of mine own conception. 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't. But where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days.

Knight                Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away.

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Lear                   No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her.

**Exit a KNIGHT.**

                          Go you, call hither my Fool.

**Exit a KNIGHT.**

                          Re-enter OSWALD.

                          O, you sir, you! Come you hither, sir.  
                          Who am I, sir?

Oswald                My lady's father.

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.

Lear                   Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?  
                          [Striking him.  
Oswald                I'll not be stricken, my lord.

Kent                   [Tripping him] Nor tripped neither, you base football player.

Lear                   I thank thee, fellow; thou serv'st me and I'll love thee.

Kent                   [To OSWALD] Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences. Away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry - but away! Go to! Have you wisdom? So.  
                          [Pushing OSWALD out.

Lear                   Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest of thy service.  
                          [Giving KENT money.

**Enter FOOL.**

Fool                   Let me hire him too; here's my coxcomb.  
                          [Offering KENT his cap.

Lear                   How now, my pretty knave, how dost thou?

Fool                   Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

Kent                   Why, Fool?

Fool                   Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour. Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits thou'lt catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, Nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

Lear                   Why, my boy?

Fool                   If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

Lear                   Take heed, sirrah, the whip.

Fool                   Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out when the Lady Brach may stand by th'fire and stink.

Lear                   A pestilent gall to me!

Fool                   Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

Lear                   Do.

Fool                   Mark it, Nuncle:  
  
                          Have more than thou showest,  
                          Speak less than thou knowest,  
                          Lend less than thou owest,  
                          Ride more than thou goest,  
                          Learn more than thou trowest,

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Set less than thou throwest;  
Leave thy drink and thy whore,  
And keep in-a-door,  
And thou shalt have more  
Than two tens to a score

- Kent This is nothing, Fool.
- Fool Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, Nuncle?
- Lear Why no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.
- Fool [To KENT] Prithee tell him so much the rent of his land comes to; he will not believe a Fool.
- Lear A bitter Fool!
- Fool Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet one?
- Lear No, lad; teach me.
- Fool That lord that counselled thee  
To give away thy land,  
Come place him here by me;  
Do thou for him stand.  
The sweet and bitter fool  
Will presently appear;  
The one in motley here,  
The other found out there.
- Lear Dost thou call me fool, boy?
- Fool All thy other titles thou hast given away, that thou wast born with.
- Kent This is not altogether fool, my lord.
- Fool No, faith, lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly out they would have part on't. And ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Nuncle, give me an egg and I'll give thee two crowns.
- Lear What two crowns shall they be?
- Fool Why, after I have cut the egg i'th'middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crowns i'th'middle and gavest away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.
- [Sings] Fools had ne'er less grace in a year,  
For wise men are grown foppish  
And know not how their wits to wear,  
Their manners are so apish.
- Lear When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?
- Fool I have used it, Nuncle, ere since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers; for when thou gav'st them the rod and putt'st down thine own breeches,
- [Sings] Then they for sudden joy did weep,  
And I for sorrow sung,  
That such a king should play bo-peep,  
And go the fools among.
- Prithee, Nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy Fool to lie; I would fain learn to lie.
- Lear An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped.
- Fool I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are: they'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipped for lying; and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o'thing than a fool; and yet I would not be thee, Nuncle: thou hast pared thy wit o'both sides and left nothing

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i'th'middle. Here comes one o'the parings.

**Enter GONERIL.**

Lear How now, daughter! What makes that frontlet on? You are too much of late i'th'frown.

Fool Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing. [To GONERIL] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing.  
Mum, mum!  
He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,  
Weary of all, shall want some.  
[Pointing to LEAR] That's a shelled peascod.

Goneril Not only, sir, this your all-licensed Fool,  
But other of 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; but now grow fearful,  
By what yourself too late have spoke and done,  
That you protect this course, and put it on  
By your allowance; which if you should, the fault  
Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,  
Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,  
Might in their working do you that offence  
Which else was shame, that then necessity  
Will call discreet proceeding.

Fool For you know, Nuncle,  
The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,  
That it's had it head bit off by it young.  
So, out went the candle and we were left darkling.

Lear Are you our daughter?

Goneril I would you would make use of your good wisdom,  
Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away  
These dispositions which of late transport you  
From what you rightly are.

Fool May not an ass know when a cart draws the horse?  
Whoop, Jug, I love thee.

Lear Does any here know me? This is not Lear.  
Does Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, his discernings  
Are lethargied - Ha, waking? 'Tis not so.  
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool Lear's shadow.

Lear I would learn that; for by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters.

Fool Which they will make an obedient father.

Lear Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Goneril This admiration, sir, is much o'th'savour  
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you  
To understand my purposes aright.  
As you are old and reverend, should be wise.  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;  
Men so disordered, so deboshed and bold,  
That this our court, infected with their manners,  
Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust  
Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel  
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak  
For instant remedy. Be then desired

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By her that else will take the thing she begs  
A little to disquantity your train;  
And the remainders that shall still depend  
To be such men as may besort your age,  
Which know themselves and you.

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.**

Lear                   Woe, that too late repents! - O, sir, are you come?  
Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses!  
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child  
Than the sea-monster!

Albany                Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear                   [To GONERIL] Detested kite, thou liest!  
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
That all particulars of duty know,  
And in the most exact regard support  
The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
Which, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature  
From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,  
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
[Striking his head.  
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in  
And thy dear judgment out! Go, go, my people.

**Exeunt KENT and KNIGHTS.**

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

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 honour her. If she must teem,  
Create her child of spleen, that it may live  
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.  
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,  
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,  
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt, 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 more of it;  
But let his disposition have that scope  
As dotage gives it.

**Re-enter LEAR.**

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

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Albany                   What's the matter, sir?

Lear                     I'll tell thee. [To GONERIL] Life and death! I am ashamed  
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,  
That these hot tears which break from me perforce  
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!  
Th'untented woundings of a father's curse  
Pierce every sense about thee! - Old fond eyes,  
Beweep this cause again I'll pluck ye out  
And cast you, with the waters that you loose,  
To temper clay. Yea, is't come to this?  
Ha, let it be so! I have another daughter  
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable.  
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails  
She'll flay thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find  
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think  
I have cast off for ever.

**Exit**

Goneril                 Do you mark that?

Albany                 I cannot be so partial, Goneril,  
To the great love I bear you -

Goneril                 Pray you, content. What, Oswald, ho!  
[To FOOL]  
You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master.

Fool                    Nuncle Lear, Nuncle Lear, tarry; take the Fool with thee.  
A fox, when one has caught her,  
And such a daughter,  
Should sure to the slaughter,  
If my cap would buy a halter.  
So the Fool follows after.

**Exit**

Goneril                 This man hath had good counsel! A hundred knights!  
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep  
At point a hundred knights; yes, that on every dream,  
Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,  
He may enguard 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.  
Let me still take away the harms I fear,  
Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart.  
What he hath uttered I have writ my sister;  
If she sustain him and his hundred knights  
When I have showed th'unfitness -

**Re-enter OSWALD.**

                              How now, Oswald!  
                              What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

Oswald                 Ay, madam.

Goneril                 Take you some company, and away to horse.  
Inform her full of my particular fear,  
And thereto add such reasons of your own  
As may compact it more. Get you gone;  
And hasten your return.

**Exit OSWALD.**

No, no, my lord,  
This milky gentleness and course of yours,  
Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,  
You are much more at task for want of wisdom

Than praised for harmful mildness.

Albany                   How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell.  
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

Goneril                 Nay, then -

Albany                 Well, well; th'event.

**Exeunt**

### **Scene 5. Court before the Duke of Albany's Palace.**

**Enter** LEAR, KENT, and FOOL.

Lear                    Go you before to Gloucester with these letters. Acquaint my daughter no further with anything you know than comes from her demand out of the letter. If your diligence be not speedy I shall be there afore you.

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

**Exit**

Fool                    If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in danger of kibes?

Lear                    Ay, boy.

Fool                    Then I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall not go slipshod.

Lear                    Ha, ha, ha!

Fool                    Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for though she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.

Lear                    What canst tell, boy?

Fool                    She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i'th'middle on's face?

Lear                    No.

Fool                    Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.

Lear                    I did her wrong.

Fool                    Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Lear                    No.

Fool                    Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

Lear                    Why?

Fool                    Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.

Lear                    I will forget my nature. So kind a father! Be my horses ready?

Fool                    Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

Lear                    Because they are not eight.

Fool                    Yes, indeed. Thou wouldst make a good fool.

Lear                    To take't again perforce! Monster Ingratitude!

Fool                    If thou wert my Fool, Nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

Lear                    How's that?

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Fool                    Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.

Lear                    O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!  
Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

**Enter** 1st GENTLEMAN.

How now, are the horses ready?

1st Gentleman        Ready, my lord.

Lear                    Come, boy.

Fool                    She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure,  
Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter.

**Exeunt**

## ACT 2.

SCENE 1. A Court within the Earl of Gloucester's Castle.

**Enter** EDMUND and CURAN, meeting.

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. You have heard of the news abroad? I mean the whispered ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments.

Edmund Not I. Pray you, what are they?

Curan Have you heard of no likely wars toward 'twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

Edmund Not a word.

Curan You may do then, in time. Fare you well, sir.

**Exit**

Edmund The duke be here tonight! The better! Best!  
This weaves itself perforce into my business.  
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 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?  
He's coming hither now, i'th'night, i'th'haste,  
And Regan with him. Have you nothing said  
Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?  
Advise yourself.

Edgar I am sure on't, 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.  
[Calling] Yield; come before my father. Light, ho, here!  
- Fly, brother. - Torches, torches! - So, farewell.

**Exit** EDGAR.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion  
Of my more fierce endeavour.  
[Wounds his arm.  
I have seen drunkards  
Do more than this in sport. - Father, father!  
Stop, stop! No help?

**Enter** GLOUCESTER, and SERVANTS with torches.

Gloucester Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

Edmund Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,  
Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon  
To stand auspicious mistress.

Gloucester But where is he?

Edmund Look, sir, I bleed.

Gloucester Where is the villain, Edmund?

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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;  
But that I told him the revenging gods  
'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend;  
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond  
The child was bound to th'father; sir, in fine,  
Seeing how loathly opposite I stood  
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion  
With his prepared sword he charges home  
My unprovided body, lanced mine arm;  
And when he saw my best alarumed spirits  
Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to th'encounter,  
Or whether gasted by the noise I made,  
Full suddenly he fled.

Gloucester Let him fly far,  
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;  
And found - dispatch. The noble duke my master,  
My worthy arch and patron, comes tonight.  
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 to do it, with curst speech  
I threatened to discover him. He replied  
'Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think  
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal  
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee  
Make thy words faithed? No; what I should deny -  
As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce  
My very character - I'd turn it all  
To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice;  
And thou must make a dullard of the world  
If they not thought the profits of my death  
Were very pregnant and potential spirits  
To make thee seek it.'

Gloucester O strange and fastened villain!  
Would he deny his letter, said he? I never got him.  
[Tucket within.  
Hark, the duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.  
All ports I'll bar, the villain shall not 'scape;  
The duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture  
I will send far and near that all the kingdom  
May have due note of him; and of my land,  
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,  
Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

Regan If it be true, all vengeance comes too short  
Which can pursue th'offender. 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

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

That tended 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;  
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,  
To have th'expense and waste of his revenues.  
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 childlike office.

Edmund It was my duty, sir.

Gloucester He did bewray his practice; and received  
This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

Cornwall Is he pursued?

Gloucester Ay, my good lord.

Cornwall If he be taken he shall never more  
Be feared of doing harm. Make your own purpose,  
How in my strength you please. 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.

Gloucester For him I thank your grace.

Cornwall You know not why we came to visit you -

Regan Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night.  
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some prize,  
Wherein we must have use of your advice.  
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,  
Of differences, which I best thought it fit  
To answer from our home; the several messengers  
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,  
Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow  
Your needful counsel to our businesses,  
Which craves the instant use.

Gloucester I serve you, madam.  
Your graces are right welcome.  
[Flourish]

**Exeunt**

**Scene 2. Before Gloucester's Castle.**

**Enter** KENT and OSWALD, severally.

Oswald Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house?

Kent Ay.

Oswald Where may we set our horses?

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Kent I'th'mire.

Oswald Prithee, if thou lov'st me tell me.

Kent I love thee not.

Oswald Why, then I care not for thee.

Kent If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold I would make thee care for me.

Oswald Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

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, 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, pandar, 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 since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the king?  
[Drawing his sword] Draw, you rogue; for though it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop o'th'moonshine of you. You whoreson cullionly barber-monger, draw.

Oswald Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

Kent Draw, you rascal; you come with letters against the king, and take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks. Draw, you rascal; come your ways.

Oswald Help, ho! Murder! Help!

Kent Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue, stand; you neat slave, strike.  
[Beats him.  
Oswald Help, ho! Murder, murder!

**Enter EDMUND**, with his rapier drawn.

Edmund How now! What's the matter? Part!

Kent With you, goodman boy, if you please. Come, I'll flesh ye. Come on, young master.

**Enter CORNWALL**, **REGAN**, **GLOUCESTER**, and **SERVANTS**.

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 I am scarce in breath, my lord.

Kent No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee; a tailor made thee.

Cornwall Thou art a strange fellow - a tailor make a man?

Kent A tailor, sir. A stone-cutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two years o'th'trade.

Cornwall Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

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Oswald                    This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his grey 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 with him. - Spare my grey 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. Such smiling rogues as these,  
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords a-twain  
Which are too intrinse t'unloose; smooth every passion  
That in the natures of their lords rebel;  
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;  
Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks  
With every gale and vary of their masters,  
Knowing naught, like dogs, but following.  
A plague upon your epileptic visage!  
Smile you my speeches as I were a fool?  
Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain  
I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

Cornwall                 What, art thou mad, old fellow?

Gloucester               How fell you out? Say that.

Kent                        No contraries hold more antipathy  
Than I and such a knave.

Cornwall                 Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault?

Kent                        His countenance likes me not.

Cornwall                 No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

Kent                        Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain.  
I have seen better faces in my time  
Than stands on any shoulder that I see  
Before me at this instant.

Cornwall                 This is some fellow  
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect  
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb  
Quite from his nature: he cannot flatter, he,  
An honest mind and plain - he must speak truth.  
An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.  
These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness  
Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends  
Than twenty silly-ducking observants  
That stretch their duties nicely.

Kent                        Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,  
Under th'allowance of your great aspect,  
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire  
On flick'ring Phoebus' front -

Cornwall                 What mean'st by this?

Kent                        To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave; which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to't.

Cornwall                 What was th'offence you gave him?

Oswald                    I never gave him any.  
It pleased the king his master very late  
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;  
When he, compact, and flattering his displeasure,

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Tripped me behind; being down, insulted, railed,  
And put upon him such a deal of man  
That worthied him, got praises of the king  
For him attempting who was self-subdued;  
And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,  
Drew on me here again.

- Kent                   None of these rogues and cowards  
But Ajax is their fool.
- 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.
- Cornwall             Fetch forth the stocks. As I have life and honour,  
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.
- Cornwall             This is a fellow of the selfsame colour  
Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks.  
[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't. Your purposed low correction  
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches  
For pilf'rings and most common trespasses  
Are punished with. The king must take it ill  
That he, 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 lord, away.

**Exeunt** all but GLOUCESTER and KENT.

- Gloucester           I am sorry for thee, friend; 'tis the duke's pleasure,  
Whose disposition all the world well knows  
Will not be rubbed nor stopped. 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.  
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.  
Give you good morrow!
- Gloucester           The duke's to blame in this;  
'Twill be ill taken.

**Exit**

- Kent                   Good king, that must approve the common saw,  
Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st  
To the warm sun!  
Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,

That by thy comfortable beams I may  
Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles  
But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,  
Who hath most fortunately been informed  
Of my obscured course; and shall find time  
From this enormous state, seeking to give  
Losses their remedies. All weary and o'erwatched,  
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
This shameful lodging.  
Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel!  
[He sleeps.]

### Scene 3. A Wood.

**Enter** EDGAR.

Edgar                    I heard myself proclaimed;  
And by the happy hollow of a tree  
Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place  
That guard and most unusual vigilance  
Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape  
I will preserve myself; and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury, in contempt of man,  
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,  
Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots,  
And with presented nakedness outface  
The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of Bedlam beggars who, with roaring voices,  
Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,  
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod, poor Tom -  
That's something yet; Edgar I nothing am.

**Exit**

### Scene 4. Before Gloucester's Castle.

KENT in the Stocks.

Enter LEAR, FOOL, and 1st GENTLEMAN.

Lear                    'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,  
And not send back my messenger.

1st Gentleman        As I learned,  
The night before there was no purpose in them  
Of this remove.

Kent                    Hail to thee, noble master!

Lear                    Ha!  
Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

Kent                    No, my lord.

Fool                    Ha, ha, he wears cruel garters! Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by  
th'neck, monkeys by th'loins, and men by th'legs: when a man's overlustly at legs  
then he wears wooden nether-stocks.

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

Kent                   It is both he and she,  
Your son and daughter.

Lear                   No.

Kent                   Yes.

Lear                   No, I say.

Kent                   I say, yea.

Lear                   No, no, they would not.

Kent                   Yes, they have.

Lear                   By Jupiter, I swear, no.

Kent                   By Juno, I swear, ay.

Lear                   They durst not do't;  
They could not, would not do't; 'tis worse than murder  
To do upon respect such violent outrage.  
Resolve me with all modest haste which way  
Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,  
Coming from us.

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,  
Stewed in his haste, half breathless, panting forth  
From Goneril his mistress salutations;  
Delivered letters, spite of intermission,  
Which presently they read; on whose contents  
They summoned up their meiny, straight took horse,  
Commanded 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 which 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.

Fool                   Winter's not gone yet if the wild-geese fly that way.

                          [Sings] Fathers that wear rags  
Do make their children blind,  
But fathers that bear bags  
Shall see their children kind.  
Fortune, that arrant whore,  
Ne'er turns the key to th'poor.

                          But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou canst  
tell in a year.

Lear                   O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!  
Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,  
Thy element's below. Where is this daughter?

Kent                   With the earl, sir, here within.

Lear                   [To 1st GENTLEMAN] Follow me not; stay here.

**Exit**

1st Gentleman       Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

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Kent None.  
How chance the king comes with so small a number?

Fool An thou hadst been set i'th'stocks for that question, thou'dst well deserved it.

Kent Why, Fool?

Fool We'll set thee to school to an ant to teach thee there's no labouring i'th'winter. All that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men; and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again; I would have none but knaves follow it, since a Fool gives it.

[Sings] That sir which serves and seeks for gain,  
And follows but for form,  
Will pack when it begins to rain,  
And leave thee in the storm.  
But I will tarry, the Fool will stay,  
And let the wise man fly.  
The knave turns Fool that runs away;  
The Fool no knave, perdy.

Kent Where learned you this, Fool?

Fool Not i'th'stocks, fool.

**Re-enter** LEAR, with GLOUCESTER.

Lear Deny to speak with me? They are `sick'! They are `weary'!  
They have `travelled all the night'! Mere fetches,  
The images of revolt and flying-off.  
Fetch me a better answer.

Gloucester My dear lord,  
You know the fiery quality of the duke,  
How unremovable and fixed he is  
In his own course.

Lear Vengeance, plague, death, confusion!  
Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,  
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

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

Lear Informed them! Dost thou understand me, man?

Gloucester Ay, my good lord.

Lear The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father  
Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends service.  
Are they informed of this? My breath and blood!  
Fiery! The fiery duke! Tell the hot duke that -  
No, but not yet; maybe he is not well.  
Infirmity doth still neglect all office  
Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves  
When nature, being oppressed, commands the mind  
To suffer with the body. I'll forbear;  
And am fallen out with my more headier will  
To take the indisposed and sickly fit  
For the sound man.  
[Looking on Kent.  
Death on my state! Wherefore  
Should he sit here? This act persuades me  
That this remotion of the duke and her  
Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.  
Go tell the duke and's wife I'd 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.

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Gloucester I would have all well betwixt you.

**Exit**

Lear O me, my heart, my rising heart! But, down!

Fool Cry to it, Nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em i'th'paste alive. She knapped 'em o'th'coxcombs with a stick and cried 'Down, wantons, down!' 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.

**Re-enter** GLOUCESTER, with CORNWALL, REGAN, and SERVANTS.

Lear Good morrow to you both.

Cornwall Hail to your grace!  
[KENT is set at liberty.]

Regan I am glad to see your highness.

Lear Regan, I think you are. I know what reason I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, Sepulchring an adult'ress. [To KENT] O, are you free? Some other time for that. - Beloved Regan, Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here. [Pointing to his heart.] I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe With how depraved a quality - O Regan!

Regan I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope You less know how to value her desert Than she to scant her duty.

Lear Say, how is that?

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

Lear My curses on her!

Regan O, sir, you are old;  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confine. 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.

Lear Ask her forgiveness?  
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:  
'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;  
Age is unnecessary;  
[Kneeling.]  
on my knees I beg  
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.'

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

Lear [Rising] Never, Regan.  
She hath abated me of half my train,  
Looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpentlike, upon the very heart.  
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall  
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,  
You taking airs, with lameness!

Cornwall Fie, sir, fie!

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- Lear                    You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames  
                              Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,  
                              You fen-sucked fogs drawn by the powerful sun,  
                              To fall and blister!
- Regan                    O the blest gods! So will you wish on me  
                              When the rash mood is on.
- Lear                    No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse;  
                              Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give  
                              Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but thine  
                              Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis 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. Thou better know'st  
                              The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
                              Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude.  
                              Thy half o'th'kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
                              Wherein I thee endowed.
- Regan                    Good sir, to th'purpose.
- Lear                    Who put my man i'th'stocks?  
                              [Tucket within.  
                              Cornwall            What trumpet's that?
- Regan                    I know't my sister's. This approves her letter,  
                              That she would soon be here.
- Enter OSWALD.**
- Is your lady come?
- Lear                    This is a slave whose easy-borrowed pride  
                              Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.  
                              Out, varlet, from my sight!
- Cornwall                What means your grace?
- Lear                    Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope  
                              Thou didst not know on't. Who comes here?
- Enter GONERIL.**
- O heavens,  
                              If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
                              Allow obedience, if you 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, will you take her by the hand?
- Goneril                Why not by th'hand, sir? How have I offended?  
                              All's not offence that indiscretion finds  
                              And dotage terms so.
- Lear                    O sides, you are too tough!  
                              Will you yet hold? How came my man i'th'stocks?
- Cornwall                I set him there, sir; but his own disorders  
                              Deserved much less advancement.
- 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 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

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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.

[Pointing at 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.
- Lear Is this well spoken?
- Regan I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers?  
 Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
 Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger  
 Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,  
 Should many people under two commands  
 Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.
- 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 ye  
  
 We could control them. If you will come to me,  
 For now I spy a danger, I entreat you  
 To bring but five-and-twenty; to no more  
 Will I give place or notice.
- Lear I gave you all -
- Regan And in good time you gave it.
- Lear Made you my guardians, my depositaries,  
 But kept a reservation to be followed  
 With such a number. What, must I come to you  
 With five-and-twenty? Regan, said you so?
- Regan And speak't again, my lord. No more with me.
- 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;

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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?

Lear                    O reason not the need! Our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;  
If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need -  
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!  
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man  
As full of grief as age; wretched in both.  
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts  
Against their father, fool me not so much  
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,  
And let not women's weapons, water drops,  
Stain my man's cheeks. No, you unnatural hags,  
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.  
[Storm and tempest heard.  
I have full cause of weeping, but this heart  
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws  
Or ere I'll weep. O Fool, I shall go mad.

**Exeunt** LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT, FOOL, and GENTLEMAN.

Cornwall               Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

Regan                   This house is little; the old man and's people  
Cannot be well bestowed.

Goneril               'Tis his own blame; hath put himself from rest,  
And must needs taste his folly.

Regan                   For his particular 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.

**Re-enter** GLOUCESTER.

He is returned.

Gloucester            The king is in high rage.

Cornwall               Whither is he going?

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

Cornwall               'Tis 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; for many miles about  
There's scarce a bush.

Regan                   O sir, to wilful men  
The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors;  
He is attended with a desperate train,  
And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Cornwall

Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night;  
My Regan counsels well. Come out o'th'storm.

**Exeunt**

## ACT 3.

### Scene 1. A Heath.

A storm, with thunder and lightning.

**Enter** KENT and 1st GENTLEMAN, meeting.

Kent                   Who's there, besides foul weather?

1st Gentleman       One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

Kent                   I know you. Where's the king?

1st Gentleman       Contending with the fretful elements;  
Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,  
Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,  
That things might change or cease; tears his white hair,  
Which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage  
Catch in their fury and make nothing of;  
Strives in his little world of man to outstorn  
The to-and-fro conflicting wind and rain.  
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,  
The lion and the belly-pinched wolf  
Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,  
And bids what will take all.

Kent                   But who is with him?

1st Gentleman       None but the Fool, who labours to outjest  
His heart-struck injuries.

Kent                   Sir, I do know you,  
And dare, upon the warrant of my note,  
Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,  
Although as yet the face of it is covered  
With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;  
Who have - as who have not that their great stars  
Throned and set high? - servants, who seem no less,  
Which are to France the spies and speculations  
Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,  
Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,  
Or the hard rein which both of them hath borne  
Against the old kind king; or something deeper,  
Whereof perchance these are but furnishings -  
But, true it is, 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 sorrow  
The king hath cause to plain.  
I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,  
And from some knowledge and assurance offer  
This office to you.

1st Gentleman       I will talk further with you.

Kent                   No, do not.  
For confirmation that I am much more  
Than my out-wall, open this purse and take  
What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia -  
As fear not but you shall - show her this ring,

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

And she will tell you who that fellow is  
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!  
I will go seek the king.

1st 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 the other.

**Exeunt** severally.

## Scene 2. Another part of the Heath.

Storm still.

Enter LEAR and FOOL.

Lear Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!

You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world,  
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once  
That makes ingrateful man!

Fool O Nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out  
o'door. Good Nuncle, in; ask thy daughters' blessing; here's a night pities neither  
wise men nor fools.

Lear Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire; spout, rain!  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.  
I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness.  
I never gave you kingdom, called you children;  
You owe me no subscription. Then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,  
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man;  
But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That will with two pernicious daughters join  
Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this. O, ho, 'tis foul!

Fool He that has a house to put's head in has a good headpiece.

[Sings] The cod-piece that will house  
Before the head has any,  
The head and he shall louse;  
So beggars marry many.  
The man that makes his toe  
What he his heart should make,  
Shall of a corn cry woe,  
And turn his sleep to wake.

For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass.

**Enter** KENT, disguised.

Lear No, I will be the pattern of all patience;  
I will say nothing.

Kent Who's there?

Fool Marry, here's grace and a codpiece - that's a wise man and a fool

Kent Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies  
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,  
And make them keep their caves. Since I was man  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never  
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry  
Th'affliction nor the fear.

Lear                    Let the great gods  
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,  
That hast within thee undivulged crimes  
Unwhipped of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand,  
Thou perjured, and thou simular of virtue  
That art incestuous; caitiff, to pieces shake,  
That under covert and convenient seeming  
Has practised on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,  
Rive your concealing continents, and cry  
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
More sinned against than sinning.

Kent                    Alack, bareheaded!  
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;  
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.  
Repose you there while I to this hard house -  
More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,  
Which even but now, demanding after you,  
Denied me to come in - return, and force  
Their scanted courtesy.

Lear                    My wits begin to turn.  
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?  
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?  
The art of our necessities is strange,  
And can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.  
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
That's sorry yet for thee.

Fool                    [Sings] He that has and a little tiny wit,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
Though the rain it raineth every day.

Lear                    True, boy. - Come, bring us to this hovel.

**Exeunt** LEAR and KENT.

Fool                    This is a brave night to cool a courtezan. I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:  
When priests are more in word than matter,  
When brewers mar their malt with water,  
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,  
No heretics burned but wenches' suitors,  
When every case in law is right,  
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight,  
When slanders do not live in tongues,  
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs,  
When usurers tell their gold i'th'field,  
And bawds and whores do churches build,  
Then shall the realm of Albion  
Come to great confusion;  
Then comes the time, who lives to see't,  
That going shall be used with feet.  
This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time.

**Exit**

**Scene 3. A Room in Gloucester's Castle.**

**Enter** GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.

Gloucester            Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house, charged me, on pain of perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, or any way sustain him.

Edmund                Most savage and unnatural!

Gloucester            Go to; say you nothing. There is division between 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 is part of a power already footed; we must incline to the king. I will look him, and privily 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. If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king my old master must be relieved. There is strange things toward, Edmund; pray you be careful.

**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. Before a Hovel

**Enter** LEAR, KENT disguised, and FOOL.

Kent                    Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter;  
The tyranny of the open night's too rough  
For nature to endure.  
[Storm still.  
Lear Let me alone.

Kent                    Good my lord, enter here.

Lear                    Wilt break my heart?

Kent                    I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear                    Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin; so 'tis to thee;  
But where the greater malady is fixed  
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear;  
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea  
Thou'dst meet the bear i'th'mouth. When the mind's free  
The body's delicate; this tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there - filial ingratitude!  
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home.  
No, I will weep no more. In such a night  
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.

In such a night as this! O Regan, Gonerill!  
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.

Lear                    Prithee go in thyself; seek thine own ease.  
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.  
[To FOOL] In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty -  
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

**Exit** FOOL into the hovel.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,  
And show the heavens more just.

Edgar [Within the hovel] Fathom and half! Fathom and half! Poor Tom!  
Enter FOOL, from the hovel.

Fool Come not in here, Nuncle; here's a spirit.  
Help me, help me!

Kent Give me thy hand. Who's there?

Fool A spirit, a spirit! He says his name's Poor Tom.

Kent What art thou that dost grumble there i'th'straw?  
Come forth.

**Enter** EDGAR disguised as Poor Tom, a madman.

Edgar Away! The foul fiend follows me!  
Through the sharp hawthorn blow the cold winds.  
Humh! Go to thy bed and warm thee.

Lear Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Edgar Who gives anything to poor Tom? - whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and  
through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid  
knives under his pillow and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge;  
made him proud of heart to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges  
to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold. O, do  
de, do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking. Do poor  
Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now, and  
there, and there again, and there.  
[Storm still.]

Lear What, has his daughters brought him to this pass?  
Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all?

Fool Nay, he reserved a blanket; else we had been all shamed.

Lear Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air  
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

Kent He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.  
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
Judicious punishment! 'Twas this flesh begot  
Those pelican daughters.

Edgar Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill:  
Alow, alow, loo, loo!

Fool This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

Edgar Take heed o'th'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.  
Tom's a-cold.

Lear What hast thou been?

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- Edgar                   A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of heaven; one that slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it. Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured the Turk; false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.  
Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind,  
Says suum, mun, hey no nonny.  
Dolphin my boy, boy, sessa! Let him trot by.  
[Storm still.]
- Lear                    Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha, here's three on's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself! Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here.  
[Tearing off his clothes.]
- Enter** GLOUCESTER, with a torch.
- Fool                    Prithee, Nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart - a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.
- Edgar                   This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet. He begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin, squints the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.  
  
[Sings] Swithold footed thrice the 'old;  
He met the nightmare and her ninefold;  
Bid her alight,  
And her troth plight,  
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!
- Kent                    How fares your grace?
- Lear                    What's he?
- Kent                    Who's there? What is't you seek?
- Gloucester            What are you there? Your names?
- Edgar                   Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the todpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets, swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-punished and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body, Horse to ride, and weapons to wear;  
But mice and rats and such small deer  
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.  
Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin; peace, thou fiend!
- Gloucester            What, hath your grace no better company?
- Edgar                   The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman; Modo he's called, and Mahu.
- Gloucester            Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile  
That it doth hate what gets it.
- Edgar                   Poor Tom's a-cold.
- Gloucester            Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer  
T'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 I have ventured to come seek you out  
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Lear First let me talk with this philosopher.  
[To EDGAR] What is the cause of thunder?

Kent Good my lord, take his offer; go into th'house.

Lear I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.  
[To EDGAR] What is your study?

Edgar How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

Lear Let me ask you one word in private.

Kent Importune him once more to go, my lord;  
His wits begin t'unsettle.

Gloucester Canst thou blame him?  
[Storm still.  
His daughters seek his death. Ah, that good Kent;  
He said it would be thus - poor banished man!  
Thou sayst 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  
But lately, very late. I loved him, friend,  
No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,  
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!  
I do beseech your grace -

Lear O, cry you mercy, sir.  
[To EDGAR] Noble philosopher, your company.

Edgar Tom's a-cold.

Gloucester In, fellow, there, into th'hovel; keep thee warm.

Lear Come, let's in all.

Kent This way, my lord.

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.

Lear Come, good Athenian.

Gloucester No words, no words - hush!

Edgar Child Rowland to the dark tower came,  
His word was still 'Fie, foh, and fum,  
I smell the blood of a British man.'

**Exeunt**

**Scene 5. A Room in Gloucester's Castle.**

**Enter** CORNWALL and EDMUND.

Cornwall I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

Edmund How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

Cornwall I now perceive it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reprovable badness in himself.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Edmund                   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                True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

Edmund                [Aside] If I find him comforting the king it will stuff his suspicion more fully. [To CORNWALL] I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

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

**Exeunt**

**Scene 6. An Outhouse of Gloucester's Castle.**

**Enter** KENT disguised, and GLOUCESTER.

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.

**Enter** LEAR, EDGAR as Poor Tom, and FOOL.

Edgar                  Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the Lake of Darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

Fool                    Prithee, Nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?

Lear                    A king, a king!

Fool                    No; he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

Lear                    To have a thousand with red burning spits  
Come hissing in upon 'em!

Edgar                  The foul fiend bites my back.

Fool                    He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

Lear                    It shall be done; I will arraign them straight.  
[To EDGAR] Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer.  
[To FOOL] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she-foxes!

Edgar                  Look where he stands and glares! Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?  
[Sings] Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me -

Fool                    [Sings] Her boat hath a leak,  
And she must not speak  
Why she dares not come over to thee.

Edgar                  The foul fiend haunts Poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale. Hoppedance cries in Tom's belly for two white herring. Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

Kent                    How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed.  
Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Lear I'll see their trial first. Bring in their evidence.  
[To EDGAR] Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;  
[To FOOL] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,  
Bench by his side.[To KENT] You are o'th'commission,  
Sit you too.

Edgar Let us deal justly.  
  
[Sings] Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?  
Thy sheep be in the corn,  
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,  
Thy sheep shall take no harm.  
  
Purr, the cat is grey.

Lear Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly she kicked the poor king her father.

Fool Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear She cannot deny it.

Fool Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool.

Lear 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 'scape?

Edgar Bless thy five wits!

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

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

Lear The little dogs and all,  
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.

Edgar Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs!  
Be thy mouth or black or white,  
Tooth that poisons if it bite;  
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,  
Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,  
Or bobtail tike or trundle-tail,  
Tom will make him weep and wail;  
For, with throwing thus my head,  
Dogs leapt the hatch, and all are fled.  
Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market-towns. Poor  
Tom, thy horn is dry.

Lear Then let them anatomize Regan, see what breeds about her heart. Is there any  
cause in nature that make these hard hearts? [To EDGAR] You, sir, I entertain  
for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will  
say they are Persian; but let them be changed.

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

Lear Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains. So, so. We'll go to supper  
i'th'morning.

Fool And I'll go to bed at noon.

**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 o'erheard a plot of death upon him.  
There is a litter ready; lay him in't,

And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet  
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.  
If thou shouldst dally half an hour his life,  
With thine and all that offer to defend him,  
Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up,  
And follow me, that will to some provision  
Give thee quick conduct.

Kent Oppressed nature sleeps.  
This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews  
Which, if convenience will not allow,  
Stand in hard cure.  
[To FOOL] Come, help to bear thy master;  
Thou must not stay behind.

Gloucester Come, come, away.

**Exeunt** KENT, GLOUCESTER, and FOOL, bearing off LEAR.

Edgar When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.  
Who alone suffers, suffers most i'th'mind,  
Leaving free things and happy shows behind;  
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip  
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.  
How light and portable my pain seems now,  
When that which makes me bend makes the king bow:  
He childed as I fathered. Tom, away!  
Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray  
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,  
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.  
What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the king!  
Lurk, lurk.

**Exit**

## Scene 7. A Room in Gloucester's Castle.

**Enter** CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and SERVANTS.

Cornwall [To GONERIL] Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter. The  
army of France is landed.  
[To SERVANTS] Seek out the traitor 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. Advise the duke where you are going, to a most festinate preparation;  
we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us.  
Farewell, dear sister; farewell, my Lord of Gloucester.

**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,  
Hot questrists after him, met him at gate;  
Who, with some other of the lord's dependants,  
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they boast  
To have well-armed friends.

Cornwall Get horses for your mistress.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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.

**Exeunt** other SERVANTS.

Though well we may not pass upon his life  
Without the form of justice, yet our power  
Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men  
May blame but not control.

**Enter** GLOUCESTER brought in by SERVANTS.

Who's there? The traitor?

Regan Ingrateful fox! - 'tis he.

Cornwall Bind fast his corky arms.

Gloucester What means 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 and accuse thee. I am your host;  
With robbers' hands my hospitable favours  
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

Cornwall Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

Regan Be simple-answered, for we know the truth.

Cornwall And what confederacy have you with the traitors  
Late footed in the kingdom?

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

Gloucester I have a letter guessingly set down,  
Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,  
And not from one opposed.

Cornwall Cunning.

Regan And false.

Cornwall Where hast thou sent the king?

Gloucester To Dover.

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

Cornwall Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

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

Regan Wherefore to Dover?

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Gloucester Because I would not see thy cruel nails  
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister  
In his anointed flesh rash boarish fangs.  
The sea, with such a storm as his bare head  
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed up  
And quenched the stelled fires;  
Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to rain.  
If wolves had at thy gate howled that dearn time,  
Thou shouldst have said `Good porter, turn the key.'  
All cruels else subscribe, but I shall see  
The winged vengeance overtake such children.

Cornwall See't 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!  
[GLOUCESTER's eye put out.

Regan One side will mock another; th'other too.

Cornwall If you see vengeance -

1st 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!

1st Servant If you did wear a beard upon your chin  
I'd shake it on this quarrel.  
[CORNWALL draws.  
What do you mean?

Cornwall My villain!

1st Servant [Drawing]  
Nay then, come on, and take the chance of anger.  
[They fight, and CORNWALL is wounded.

Regan Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!  
[Takes a sword and runs at him behind.

1st 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?  
[GLOUCESTER'S other eye put out.

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 call'st 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** GLOUCESTER led by a SERVANT.

How is't, 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 apace.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

**Exit** CORNWALL led by REGAN.

2nd Servant        I'll never care what wickedness I do  
                         If this man come to good.

3rd Servant        If she live long,  
                         And in the end meet the old course of death,  
                         Women will all turn monsters.

2nd Servant        Let's follow the old earl, and get the Bedlam  
                         To lead him where he would; his roguish madness  
                         Allows itself to anything.

3rd Servant        Go thou; I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
                         To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

**Exeunt** severally.

# ACT 4.

## Scene 1. The Heath.

**Enter** EDGAR.

Edgar                    Yet better thus, and known to be contemned,  
Than still contemned and flattered to be worst.  
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune  
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.  
The lamentable change is from the best;  
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,  
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace;  
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
Owes nothing to thy blasts.

**Enter** GLOUCESTER, led by an OLD MAN.

   But who comes here?  
My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee  
Life would not yield to age.

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                You cannot see your way.

Gloucester            I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;  
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. O, dear son Edgar,  
The food of thy abused father's wrath,  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I'd say I had eyes again.

Old Man                How now, who's there?

Edgar                    [Aside] O gods! Who is't can say 'I am at the worst'?  
I am worse than e'er I was.

Old Man                'Tis 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.  
I'th'last night's storm I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm. My son  
Came then into my mind; and yet my mind  
Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard more since.  
As flies to wanton boys are we to th'gods:  
They kill us for their sport.

Edgar                    [Aside] How should this be?  
Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,  
Ang'ring itself and others. [Aloud] Bless thee, master!

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Gloucester Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man Ay, my lord.

Gloucester Then prithee get thee away. If, for my sake,  
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain  
I'th'way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;  
And bring some covering for this naked soul,  
Which I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man Alack, sir, he is mad.

Gloucester 'Tis the times' plague when madmen lead the blind.  
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;  
Above the rest, be gone.

Old Man I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,  
Come on't what will.

**Exit**

Gloucester Sirrah, naked fellow!

Edgar Poor Tom's a-cold. [Aside] I cannot daub it further.

Gloucester Come hither, fellow.

Edgar [Aside] And yet I must.  
[To GLOUCESTER] Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

Gloucester Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edgar Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath. Poor Tom hath been scared out of  
his good wits. Bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend. Five fiends have  
been in poor Tom at once; of lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumb-  
ness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mow-  
ing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So bless thee,  
master!

Gloucester Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues  
Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched  
Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!  
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man  
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see  
Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;  
So distribution should undo excess,  
And each man have enough. Dost thou know 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. Before the Duke of Albany's Palace.**

**Enter** GONERIL and EDMUND.

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

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**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,  
And told me I had turned the wrong side out.  
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;  
What like, offensive.

Goneril            [To EDMUND] Then shall you go no further.  
It is the cowish terror of his spirit  
That dares not undertake; he'll not feel wrongs  
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way  
May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;  
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers.  
I must change arms at home, and give the distaff  
Into my husband's hands. 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 favour.  
Decline your head; this kiss, if it durst speak,  
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.  
Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edmund            Yours in the ranks of death.

Goneril            My most dear Gloucester!

**Exit EDMUND.**

O, the difference of man and man!  
To thee a woman's services are due;  
A fool usurps my bed.

Oswald            Madam, here comes my lord.

**Exit**

**Enter ALBANY.**

Goneril            I have been worth the whistle.

Albany            O Goneril,  
You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:  
That nature which contemns its origin  
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.  
She that herself will sliver and disbranch  
From her material sap perforce must wither  
And come to deadly use.

Goneril            No more; the text is foolish.

Albany            Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;  
Filths savour but themselves. 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,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you maddened.  
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?  
A man, a prince, by him so benefitted?  
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,  
It will come  
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
Like monsters of the deep.

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Goneril Milk-livered man!  
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;

Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st  
Fools do those villains pity who are punished  
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?  
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumed helm thy state begins to threaten,  
Whilst thou, a moral fool, sits still, and cries  
'Alack, why does he so?'

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

Goneril O vain fool!

Albany Thou changed and self-covered thing, for shame,  
Bemonster not thy feature. Were't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,  
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
Thy flesh and bones; how'er thou art a fiend,  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

Goneril Marry, your manhood - mew!

**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 eyes?

Messenger A servant that he bred, thrilled with remorse,  
Opposed against the act, bending his sword  
To his great master; who, thereat enraged,  
Flew on him, and amongst them felled him dead;  
But not without that harmful stroke which since  
Hath plucked him after.

Albany This shows you are above,  
You justicers, that these our nether crimes  
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;  
'Tis from your sister.

Goneril [Aside] One way I like this well;  
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life. Another way,  
The news is not so tart. [Aloud] I'll read, and answer.

**Exit**

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 showed'st the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend;  
Tell me what more thou know'st.

**Exeunt**

### Scene 3. The French Camp near Dover.

**Enter** KENT and 1st GENTLEMAN.

Kent Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back know you no reason?

1st Gentleman Something he left imperfect in the state, which since his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return was most required and necessary.

Kent Who hath he left behind him general?

1st Gentleman The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

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

1st Gentleman Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence;  
And now and then an ample tear trilled down  
Her delicate cheek. It seemed she was a queen  
Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,  
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent O, then it moved her?

1st 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. In brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved  
If all could so become it.

Kent Made she no verbal question?

1st 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, i'th'storm, i'th'night?  
Let pity not be believed!' There she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
And clamour moistened; 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 make could not beget  
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

1st Gentleman No.

Kent Was this before the king returned?

1st Gentleman No, since.

Kent Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i'th'town,  
Who sometime, in his better tune, remembers  
What we are come about, and by no means

Will yield to see his daughter.

1st Gentleman Why, good sir?

Kent A sovereign shame so elbows him: his own unkindness,  
That stripped her from his benediction, turned her  
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights  
To his dog-hearted daughters. These things sting  
His mind so venomously that burning shame  
Detains him from Cordelia.

1st Gentleman Alack, poor gentleman!

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

1st Gentleman 'Tis so; they are afoot.

Kent Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,  
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause  
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile;  
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve  
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you  
Go along with me.

**Exeunt**

#### Scene 4. A Tent in the French Camp.

**Enter**, with DRUM and COLOURS, 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 hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,  
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
In our sustaining corn. A century send forth;  
Search every acre in the high-grown field,  
And bring him to our eye.

**Exit** a SOLDIER.

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

Doctor There is means, madam.  
Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,  
The which he lacks; that to provoke in him  
Are many simples operative, whose power  
Will close the eye of anguish.

Cordelia All blest secrets,  
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate  
In the good man's distress. Seek, seek for him,  
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life  
That wants the means to lead it.

**Enter** a MESSENGER.

Messenger News, madam:  
The British powers are marching hitherward.

Cordelia 'Tis known before; our preparation stands  
In expectation of them. O dear father,  
It is thy business that I go about;  
Therefore great France  
My mourning and importuned tears hath pitied.

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. A Room in Gloucester's Castle.**

**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?

Oswald                  I know not, lady.

Regan                    Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.  
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 life; moreover, to descry  
The strength o'th'enemy.

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

Regan                    Our troops set forth tomorrow. 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? Belike  
Some things - I know not what. I'll love thee much:  
Let me unseal the letter.

Oswald                  Madam, I had rather -

Regan                    I know your lady does not love her husband,  
I am sure of that; and at her late being here  
She gave strange oeilliades and most speaking looks  
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.

Oswald                  I, madam?

Regan                    I speak in understanding - y'are, I know't;  
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. You may gather more.  
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.

Regan                Fare thee well.

**Exeunt**

### Scene 6. The Country near Dover.

**Enter** GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant.

Gloucester            When shall I come to th'top of that same hill?

Edgar                You do climb up it now; look how we labour.

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.

Gloucester            So may it be, indeed.  
 Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st  
 In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

Edgar                You're much deceived. In nothing am I changed  
 But in my garments.

Gloucester            Methinks you're better spoken.

Edgar                Come on, sir; here's the place. Stand still. How fearful  
 And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!  
 The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
 Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down  
 Hangs one that gathers samphire - dreadful trade!  
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
 The fishermen that walk upon the beach  
 Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring bark  
 Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy  
 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge  
 That on th'unnumbered idle pebble 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 th'extreme verge. For all beneath the moon  
 Would I not leap upright.

Gloucester            Let go my hand.  
 Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel  
 Well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies and gods  
 Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off.  
 Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

Edgar                Now fare ye well, good sir.

Gloucester            With all my heart.

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

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Gloucester [Kneeling] O you mighty gods,  
This world I do renounce, and in your sights  
Shake patiently my great affliction off!  
If I could bear it longer, and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!  
[Rising]  
Now, fellow, fare thee well.  
[GLOUCESTER leaps, and falls forward.]

Edgar Gone, sir; farewell.  
And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life when life itself  
Yields to the theft. Had he been where he thought,  
By this had thought been past. 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 Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
So many fathom down precipitating  
Thou'dst shivered like an egg; but thou dost breathe,  
Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound.  
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.  
Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.

Gloucester Alack, I have no eyes.  
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit  
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort  
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,  
And frustrate his proud will.

Edgar Give me your arm.  
Up - so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

Gloucester Too well, too well.

Edgar This is above all strangeness.  
Upon the crown o'th'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 and waved like the enridged sea.  
It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father,  
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours  
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 'twould say  
`The fiend, the fiend'; he led me to that place.

Edgar Bear free and patient thoughts.

**Enter** LEAR, fantastically dressed with wild flowers.

But who comes here?  
The safer sense will ne'er accommodate

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

His master thus.

Lear No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am the king himself.

Edgar O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear Nature's above art in that respect. There's your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper; draw me a clothier's yard. Look, look, a mouse. Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do't. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant. Bring up the brown bills. O, well flown bird; i'th'clout, i'th'clout - hewgh! Give the word.

Edgar Sweet marjoram.

Lear Pass.

Gloucester I know that voice.

Lear Ha, Goneril with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had the white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say `ay' and `no' to everything that I said! `Ay' and `no' too was no good divinity. 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 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o'their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.

Gloucester The trick of that voice I do well remember:  
Is't not the king?

Lear Ay, every inch a king.  
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?  
Adultery?  
Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery! No;  
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly  
Does lecher in my sight.  
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son  
Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
Got 'tween the lawful sheets.  
To't, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.  
Behold yond simp'ring dame  
Whose face between her forks presages snow,  
That minces virtue and does shake the head  
To hear of pleasure's name;  
The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't  
With a more riotous appetite.  
Down from the waist they are Centaurs,  
Though women all above;  
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
Beneath is all the fiend's:  
There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit - burning, scalding,  
stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good  
apothecary, sweeten my imagination. There's money for thee.

Gloucester O, let me kiss that hand.

Lear Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

Gloucester O ruined piece of nature! This great world  
Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?

Lear I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny at me? No, do thy worst,  
blind Cupid; I'll not love. Read thou this challenge; mark but the penning of it.

Gloucester Were all thy letters suns, I could not see.

Edgar [Aside] I would not take this from report; it is,  
And my heart breaks at it.

Lear Read.

Gloucester What, with the case of eyes?

KING LEAR BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- Lear O ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light: yet you see how this world goes.
- Gloucester I see it feelingly.
- Lear What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears. See how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark in thine ear; change places and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?
- Gloucester Ay, sir.
- Lear And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.  
Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand.  
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back;  
Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind  
For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.  
Thorough tattered clothes great vices do appear;  
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.  
None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em.  
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power  
To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,  
And like a scurvy politician seem  
To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now;  
Pull off my boots; harder, harder - so.
- Edgar O, matter and impertinency mixed;  
Reason in madness.
- 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 know'st the first time that we smell the air  
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.
- Gloucester Alack, alack the day!
- Lear When we are born we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools. This' a good block.  
It were a delicate stratagem to shoe  
A troop of horse with felt; I'll put't in proof;  
And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,  
Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!
- Enter** 1st GENTLEMAN, with ATTENDANTS.
- 1st Gentleman O, here he is; lay hand upon him. - Sir,  
Your most dear daughter -
- 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 th'brains.
- 1st Gentleman You shall have anything.
- Lear No seconds? All myself?  
Why this would make a man a man of salt,  
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,  
Ay, and laying autumn's dust. I will die bravely,  
Like a smug bridegroom. What, I will be jovial.  
Come, come, I am a king, masters, know you that?
- 1st Gentleman You are a royal one, and we obey you.
- Lear Then there's life in't. Come, an you get it you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

**Exit** running, followed by ATTENDANTS.

1st 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.

1st Gentleman      Sir, speed you; what's your will?

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

1st Gentleman      Most sure and vulgar; everyone hears that  
Which can distinguish sound.

Edgar                But, by your favour,  
How near's the other army?

1st Gentleman      Near, and on speedy foot. The main descry  
Stands on the hourly thought.

Edgar                I thank you, sir; that's all.

1st Gentleman      Though that the queen on special cause is here,  
Her army is moved on.

Edgar                I thank you, sir.

**Exit** 1st 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 bidding.

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 hand  
Put strength enough to't.  
[EDGAR interposes.

Oswald             Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Dar'st thou support a published traitor? Hence,  
Lest that th'infection of his fortune take  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

Edgar                Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

Oswald             Let go, slave, or thou diest.

Edgar                Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. An chud ha' bin zwag-  
gered out of my life, 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come  
not near th'old man; keep out, che vor' ye, or lse try whether your costard or my  
ballow be the harder. Chill be plain with you.

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Oswald Out, dunghill!

Edgar Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come; no matter vor your foins.  
[They fight, 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 find'st about me  
To Edmund Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out  
Upon the British party. O untimely death,  
Death!  
[Dies.]  
Edgar I know thee well; a serviceable villain,  
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress  
As badness would desire.

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. He's dead; I am only sorry  
He had no other deathsmen. Let us see.  
Leave, gentle wax; and manners blame us not.  
To know our enemies' minds we rip their hearts;  
Their papers is more lawful.  
[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 gaol; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for  
your labour.  
Your - wife so I would say - affectionate servant,  
GONERIL."  
  
O indistinguished 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; and in the mature time  
With this ungracious paper strike the sight  
Of the death-practised duke. For him 'tis well  
That of thy death and business I can tell.

Gloucester The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense  
That I stand up and have ingenious feeling  
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract;  
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,  
And woes by wrong imaginations lose  
The knowledge of themselves.  
[Drum afar off.]  
Edgar Give me your hand.  
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.**

**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 o'erpaid.  
All my reports go with the modest truth,  
No more nor clipped, but so.

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Cordelia Be better suited;  
These weeds are memories of those worsen hours.  
I prithee, put them off.

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

Cordelia Then be't so, my good lord. [To DOCTOR] How does the king?

Doctor Madam, sleeps still.

Cordelia O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!  
Th'untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up  
Of this child-changed father.

Doctor So please your majesty  
That we may wake the king? He hath slept long.

Cordelia Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed  
l'th'sway of your own will. Is he arrayed?

**Enter** 1st GENTLEMAN, followed by LEAR in a chair carried by SERVANTS.

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

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

Cordelia Very well.  
[Music.  
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  
Did challenge 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; to watch - poor perdu -  
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire. And wast thou fain, poor father,  
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn  
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!  
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once  
Had not concluded all. - He wakes; speak to him.

Doctor Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

Cordelia How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

Lear You do me wrong to take me out o'th'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?

Lear You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

Cordelia Still, still, far wide.

Doctor He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.

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Lear                   Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?  
I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity  
To see another thus. 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 hand in benediction o'er me.  
[LEAR kneels.  
No, sir, you must not kneel.

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.

Lear                   Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. 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.

Lear                   Am I in France?

Kent                   In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear                   Do not abuse me.

Doctor                 Be comforted, good madam, the great rage,  
You see, is killed in him. And yet it is danger  
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.  
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more  
Till further settling.

Cordelia               Will't please your highness walk?

Lear                   You must bear with me.  
Pray you now, forget and forgive; I am old and foolish.

**Exeunt** all but KENT and 1st GENTLEMAN.

Gentleman            Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain?

Kent                   Most certain, sir.

Gentleman            Who is conductor of his people?

Kent                   As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.

Gentleman            They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.

Kent                   Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about; the powers of the kingdom  
approach apace.

Gentleman            The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir.

**Exit**

Kent                   My point and period will be throughly wrought,  
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

**Exit**

## ACT 5.

### Scene 1. The British Camp near Dover.

**Enter**, with DRUM and COLOURS, EDMUND, REGAN, OFFICERS, and SOLDIERS.

Edmund            Know of the duke if his last purpose hold,  
Or whether since he is advised by aught  
To change the course. He's full of alteration  
And self-reproving.  
[To an OFFICER] Bring his constant pleasure.

**Exit** OFFICER.

Regan            Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

Edmund           'Tis to be doubted, madam.

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 honoured love.

Regan            But have you never found my brother's way  
To the forfended place?

Edmund           That thought abuses you.

Regan            I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosomed with her, as far as we call hers.

Edmund           No, by mine honour, madam.

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 COLOURS, 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 rigour of our state  
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest  
I never yet was valiant. For this business,  
It touches us, as France invades our land,  
Not bolds the king, with others whom, I fear,  
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

Edmund           Sir, you speak nobly.

Regan            Why is this reasoned?

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

Albany            Let's then determine  
With th'ancient of war on our proceeding.

Edmund           I shall attend you presently at your tent.

Regan            Sister, you'll go with us?

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Goneril                    No.  
Regan                    'Tis most convenient; pray go with us.  
Goneril                    [Aside] O ho, I know the riddle. [Aloud] I will go.

**Exeunt** both the ARMIES.

As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised as a peasant.

Edgar                    [To ALBANY]  
                              If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,  
                              Hear me one word.  
Albany                    [Calling] I'll overtake you. [To EDGAR] Speak.  
Edgar                    Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.  
                              If you have victory, let the trumpet sound  
                              For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,  
                              I can produce a champion that will prove  
                              What is avouched there. If you miscarry,  
                              Your business of the world hath so an end,  
                              And machination ceases. 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 o'erlook thy paper.

**Exit** EDGAR.

**Re-enter** EDMUND.

Edmund                    The enemy's in view; draw up your powers.  
                              Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
                              By diligent discovery; but your haste  
                              Is now urged on you.  
Albany                    We will greet the time.

**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  
                              Exasperates, 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.**

Alarum within.

Enter, with DRUM and COLOURS,

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The POWERS of France, CORDELIA leading LEAR by the hand.  
They march over the stage and Exeunt

**Enter** EDGAR disguised as a peasant, 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 a retreat.

**Re-enter** EDGAR.

Edgar                    Away, old man! Give me thy hand; away!  
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en.  
Give me thy hand; come on.

Gloucester            No further, 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.

Gloucester            And that's true too.

**Exeunt**

### Scene 3. The British Camp near Dover.

**Enter**, in conquest, with DRUM and COLOURS, EDMUND, with LEAR and CORDELIA as prisoners,  
a CAPTAIN and SOLDIERS.

Edmund                Some officers take them away. Good guard,  
Until their greater pleasures first be known  
That are to censure them.

Cordelia                We are not the first  
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst.  
For thee, oppressed king, I am cast down;  
Myself could else outfrown false fortune's frown.  
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear                    No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison;  
We two alone will sing like birds i'th'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's the mystery of things  
As if we were gods' spies; and we'll wear out  
In a walled prison packs and sects of great ones  
That ebb and flow by th'moon.

Edmund                Take them away.

Lear                    Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?  
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,  
And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;  
The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,  
Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starved first.  
Come.

**Exeunt** LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded.

Edmund            Come hither, captain; hark.  
                   Take thou this note.  
                   [Giving a paper.  
                   Go follow them to prison.  
                   One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost  
                   As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way  
                   To noble fortunes. Know thou this: that men  
                   Are as the time is; to be tender-minded  
                   Does not become a sword. Thy great employment  
                   Will not bear question; either say thou'lt do't,  
                   Or thrive by other means.

Captain            I'll do't, my lord.

Edmund            About it; and write happy when th'hast done.  
                   Mark - I say 'instantly'; and carry it so  
                   As I have set it down.

Captain            I cannot draw a cart nor eat dried oats;  
                   If it be man's work I'll do't.

**Exit**

[Flourish]

Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, OFFICERS and SOLDIERS.

Albany            Sir, you have showed today your valiant strain,  
                   And fortune led you well. You have the captives  
                   Who were the opposites of this day's strife;  
                   I do require them of you, so to use them  
                   As we shall find their merits and our safety  
                   May equally determine.

Edmund            Sir, I thought it fit  
                   To send the old and miserable king  
                   To some retention and appointed guard;  
                   Whose age had charms in it, whose title more,  
                   To pluck the common bosom on his side,  
                   And turn our impressed lances in our eyes  
                   Which do command them. With him I sent the queen,  
                   My reason all the same; and they are ready  
                   Tomorrow, or at further space, t'appear  
                   Where you shall hold your session. At this time  
                   We sweat and bleed; the friend hath lost his friend,  
                   And the best quarrels in the heat are cursed  
                   By those that feel their sharpness.  
                   The question of Cordelia and her father  
                   Requires a fitter place.

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

Regan            That's as we list to grace him.  
                   Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded  
                   Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,  
                   Bore the commission of my place and person,  
                   The which immediacy may well stand up  
                   And call itself your brother.

Goneril            Not so hot.  
                   In his own grace he doth exalt himself  
                   More than in your addition.

Regan            In my rights  
                   By me invested, he compeers the best.

Albany            That were the most if he should husband you.

Regan            Jesters do oft prove prophets.

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Goneril                   Holla, holla!  
That eye that told you so looked but asquint.

Regan                    Lady, I am not well; else I should answer  
From a full-flowing stomach. - General,  
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony.  
Dispose of them, of me; the walls is thine.  
Witness the world that I create thee here  
My lord and master.

Goneril                   Mean you to enjoy him?

Albany                   The let-alone lies not in your good will.

Edmund                  Nor in thine, lord.

Albany                   Half-blooded fellow, yes.

Regan                   [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 thy attaint,  
This gilded serpent.  
[Pointing to GONERIL.  
For your claim, fair sister,  
I bar it in the interest of my wife;  
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,  
And I her husband contradict your banns.  
If you will marry, make your loves to me;  
My lady is bespoke.

Goneril                   An interlude!

Albany                   Thou art armed, Gloucester; let the trumpet sound;  
If none appear to prove upon thy person  
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
There is my pledge.  
[Throws down a glove.  
I'll make it on thy heart,  
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less  
Than I have here proclaimed thee.

Regan                   Sick, O sick!

Goneril                   [Aside] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

Edmund                  There's my exchange.  
[Throws down a glove.  
What in the world he is  
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.  
Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach,  
On him, on you, who not, I will maintain  
My truth and honour firmly.

Albany                   A herald, ho!  
Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,  
All levied in my name, have in my name  
Took their discharge.

Regan                   My sickness grows upon me.

Albany                   She is not well; convey her to my tent.

**Exit** REGAN, led by one or more.

**Enter** a HERALD.

                              Come hither, herald - Let the trumpet sound! -  
And read out this.  
[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 manifold traitor, let him

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appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in his defence.

Sound!

[First trumpet.

Again!

[Second trumpet.

Again!

[Third trumpet.

[Trumpet answers within.

**Enter** EDGAR armed, with a TRUMPET before him.

Albany                    Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
Upon this call o'th'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 and canker-bit;  
Yet am I noble as the adversary  
I come to cope.

Albany                    Which is that adversary?

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

Edmund                    Himself. What sayst thou to him?

Edgar                    Draw thy sword,  
That if my speech offend a noble heart  
Thy arm may do thee justice.  
[Drawing his sword.  
Here is mine.  
Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,  
My oath, and my profession. I protest -  
Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,  
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,  
Thy valour and thy heart - thou art a traitor,  
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,  
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,  
And, from th'extremest upward of thy head  
To the descent and dust below thy foot,  
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou `no',  
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent  
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,  
Thou liest.

Edmund                    In wisdom I should ask thy name;  
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,  
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,  
What safe and nicely I might well delay  
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.  
Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,  
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart,  
Which, for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,  
This sword of mine shall give them instant way  
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak.  
[Alarums. They fight. EDMUND falls.

Albany                    Save him, save him!

Goneril                    This is practice, Gloucester.  
By th'law of war thou wast not bound to answer  
An unknown opposite. Thou art not vanquished,  
But cozened and beguiled.

Albany                    Shut your mouth, dame,  
Or with this paper shall I stop it.  
[To EDMUND] Hold, sir,  
Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil.

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[To GONERIL] No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.

Goneril            Say if I do? - the laws are mine, not thine;  
Who can arraign me for't?

Albany            Most monstrous! O!  
Know'st thou this paper?

Goneril            Ask me not what I know.

**Exit**

Albany            Go after her. She's desperate; govern her.

**Exit** an OFFICER.

Edmund            What you have charged me with, that have I done,  
And more, much more. The time will bring it out;  
'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou  
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,  
I do forgive thee.

Edgar            Let's exchange charity.  
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;  
If more, the more th'hast wronged me.  
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.  
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to plague us.  
The dark and vicious place where thee he got  
Cost him his eyes.

Edmund            Th'hast spoken right, 'tis true.  
The wheel is come full circle; I am here.

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't.

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

Edgar            By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;  
And when 'tis told, O that my heart would burst!  
The bloody proclamation to escape  
That followed me so near - O, our lives' sweetness,  
That we the pain of death would hourly die  
Rather than die at once! - taught me to shift  
Into a madman's rags, t'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 - O fault! - 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,  
'Twixt 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.

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Edgar                    This would have seemed a period  
To such as love not sorrow; but another,  
To amplify too much, would make much more,  
And top extremity.  
Whilst I was big in clamour came there in a man  
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
Shunned my abhorred society; but then finding  
Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms  
He fastened on my neck and bellowed out  
As he'd burst heaven, threw him on my father,  
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him  
That ever ear received; which in recounting  
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life  
Began to crack. Twice then the trumpets sounded,  
And there I left him tranced.

Albany                    But who was this?

Edgar                    Kent, sir, the banished Kent, who in disguise  
Followed his enemy king, and did him service  
Improper for a slave.

**Enter** 1st GENTLEMAN with a bloody knife.

1st Gentleman        Help, help! O, help!

Edgar                    What kind of help?

Albany                    Speak, man.

Edgar                    What means this bloody knife?

1st Gentleman        'Tis hot, it smokes;  
It came even from the heart of - O, she's dead!

Albany                    Who dead? Speak, man.

1st Gentleman        Your lady, sir, your lady! And her sister  
By her is poisoned; she confesses it.

Edmund                I was contracted to them both. All three  
Now marry in an instant.

**Enter** KENT.

Edgar                    Here comes Kent

Albany                    Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.

**Exit** 1st GENTLEMAN.

This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,  
Touches us not with pity. - 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?

The bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in.

Seest thou this object, Kent?

Kent                    Alack - why thus?

Edmund                Yet Edmund was beloved:  
The one the other poisoned for my sake,  
And after slew herself.

Albany                    Even so. Cover their faces.

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Edmund I pant for life. Some good I mean to do  
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send -  
Be brief in it - to th'castle; for my writ  
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.  
Nay, send in time.

Albany Run, run! O run!

Edgar To who, my lord? Who has the office? Send  
Thy token of reprieve.

Edmund Well thought on. Take my sword,  
Give it the captain.

Edgar Haste thee, for thy life.

**Exit OFFICER.**

Edmund He 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.

Albany The gods defend her!  
Bear him hence awhile.  
[EDMUND is borne off.]

**Enter LEAR with CORDELIA dead in his arms, followed by the OFFICER.**

Lear Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!  
Had I your tongues and eyes I'd 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?

Edgar Or image of that horror?

Albany Fall and cease.

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 O my good master!

Lear Prithee away.

Edgar 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

Lear A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever.  
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!  
What is't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low - an excellent thing in woman.  
I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Officer 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

Lear Did I not, fellow?  
I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion  
I would have made him skip. I am old now,  
And these same crosses spoil me. [To KENT] Who are you?  
Mine eyes are not o'th'best, I'll tell you straight.

Kent If fortune brag of two she loved and hated,  
One of them we behold.

Lear This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

Kent The same;

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Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

Lear                   He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;  
He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

Kent                   No, my good lord, I am the very man -

Lear                   I'll see that straight.

Kent                   - That from your first of difference and decay  
Have followed your sad steps -

Lear                   You are welcome hither.

Kent                   Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly.  
Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,  
And desperately are dead.

Lear                   Ay, so I think.

Albany                He knows not what he says, and vain is it  
That we present us to him.

Edgar                Very bootless.

**Enter a MESSENGER.**

Messenger          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 and such addition as your honours  
Have more than merited. All friends shall taste  
The wages of their virtue, and all foes  
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!

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'lt come no more.  
Never, never, never, never, never!  
[To KENT] Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips.  
Look there, look there!  
[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; he hates him  
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;  
He but usurped his life.

Albany                Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is general woe.  
[To KENT and EDGAR] Friends of my soul, you twain  
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.

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Edgar                   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**, with a dead march.

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