

# King Lear

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## KING LEAR SYNOPSIS

King Lear, the aged monarch of Britain, has decided to unburden himself from the cares of rule and avoid future conflict by dividing his kingdom among his three daughters before his death.

However, prior to formally giving each daughter her share, he demands they prove their worth by publicly declaring their love for him. His two eldest daughters, Goneril and Regan, humor the old man with their effusive protestations of adoration and worship, but his youngest daughter, Cordelia, truthfully declares she loves her father only according to her bond. She also declares that half of her love will naturally go to her future husband. Whether publicly embarrassed by her refusal to play along, or jealous of Cordelia's affections, Lear, in a fit of rage, disinherits her and divides her portion between Goneril and Regan. Kent tries to reason with his impetuous master and is banished for his troubles. Although she is now disinherited, the King of France realizes Cordelia's noble character, and takes her for his queen. Goneril and Regan worry about future reckless actions by their father.

Edmund, the Earl of Gloucester's bastard son, believes men should prosper according to their natural gifts and not because of their lineage or the order of their birth. By tricking his father into believing his legitimate son Edgar is plotting against his life, Edmund hopes to one day become the Earl of Gloucester. The superstitious old Earl falls for Edmund's machinations and Edgar is forced to flee, disguising himself as a mad beggar.

Part of the bargain for dividing his kingdom is that Lear, with a train of a hundred knights, will live with Goneril and Regan by monthly turns. Lear's demanding and imperious character, not to mention his knights' crude and debauched behavior, make life very difficult for Goneril and the people of her household. When she demands that he cut his followers to fifty, Lear curses her and leaves for Regan whom he assumes will punish Goneril. Warned by Goneril of Lear's intentions, Regan and Cornwall have removed themselves to Gloucester's castle where they have put the belligerent Kent in the stocks. The next day there is a confrontation between the two daughters and Lear. Stripped of his followers and powers, Lear threatens revenge, and goes raging into a terrible storm. Although ordered not to assist Lear, Gloucester finds crude shelter for the old man, the Fool and Kent, as well as the disguised Edgar from whom Lear will not be parted. Fearing for Lear's life, he then helps him to escape to Dover, where Cordelia and the French have returned to help the beleaguered King. Edmund betrays his father to Cornwall and becomes the new Earl of Gloucester. Old Gloucester has his eyes gouged out by Cornwall and is thrown out of his castle. Cornwall is killed by a servant and Edmund becomes the desired mate of both Regan and Goneril.

Believing Edgar is Mad Tom, Gloucester persuades him to guide him to Dover, where he plans to commit suicide. Edgar tricks him into believing he has survived a terrible fall from the cliff and that the gods want him to live. Now believing Edgar to be a peasant, Gloucester allows himself to be led onwards. After meeting the mad Lear, Edgar defends his father from the opportunistic Oswald, and discovers Goneril's plot to have Albany murdered and marry Edmund.

Cordelia and Lear are united and reconciled before the battle. The English, led by Edmund, are victorious. Informed by Edgar, Albany accuses Edmund of being a traitor. Edmund duels the disguised Edgar, and is mortally wounded. Goneril has poisoned Regan in her attempt to secure Edmund and then kills herself when she sees Edmund's fate. Attempting to redeem himself, Edmund admits to ordering the deaths of Lear and Cordelia. Lear slays the soldier hanging Cordelia and then enters carrying his dead child. As Gloucester died, hearing the truth from his son Edgar, so Lear dies of a broken heart. Albany and Edgar are left to mourn and rule.

## KING LEAR

### LIST OF CHARACTERS

KING LEAR	King of Britain
GONERIL	Lear's oldest daughter
REGAN	Lear's second daughter
CORDELIA	Lear's youngest daughter
DUKE OF ALBANY	Husband of Goneril
DUKE OF CORNWALL	Husband of Regan
KING OF FRANCE	Future husband of Cordelia
DUKE OF BURGUNDY	
FOOL	Lear's fool
EARL OF KENT	
EARL OF GLOUCESTER	
EDGAR	Gloucester's legitimate son
EDMUND	Gloucester's bastard son
OSWALD	Servant to Goneril
DOCTOR	
OLD MAN	Tenant to Gloucester
CURAN	A courtier
A CAPTAIN	Under Edmund's command
GENTLEMAN	Loyal to Lear
A HERALD	
SERVANTS TO CORNWALL	
Knights attending on King Lear, officers, messengers, soldiers and attendants	
SCENE	Great Britain

## Act 1, Scene 1      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.

KENT

Is not this your son, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge.  
I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed\* to it.

KENT

I cannot conceive\* you.

GLOUCESTER

Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-wombed,  
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 into 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 honorable friend.

EDMUND

My services to your lordship.

KENT

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

*affected* - had affection for, *brazed* - brazened,  
*conceive* - understand, *issue* - offspring, *proper* - handsome

EDMUND

Sir, I shall study deserving.

GLOUCESTER

He hath been out nine years,\* and away he shall again.\*  
The King is coming.

*(Enter KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA and attendants.)*

KING LEAR

Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER

I shall, my lord.

*(Exeunt GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.)*

KING 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)  
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 words can wield the matter; dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;  
beyond what can be valued, rich or rare; no less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;  
as much as child 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 do? 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.

*out nine years* - (illegitimate sons of the wealthy often performed military service, traveled or studied abroad),  
*away he shall again* - (this could be a point of contention between Gloucester and Edmund),  
*darker purpose* - hidden intention, *several* - individual, *amorous sojourn* - visit of courtship,  
*champains riched* - enriched plains, *meads* - pastureland

To thine and Albany's issue\* be this perpetual.  
What says our second daughter, our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall?

REGAN

Sir, I am made of the self-same mettle\* that my sister is 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.

KING LEAR

To thee and thine hereditary ever remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
no less in space, validity,\* and pleasure than that conferred on Goneril.  
Now, our joy, although 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.

KING LEAR

Nothing?

CORDELIA

Nothing.

KING LEAR

Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth.  
I love your majesty according to my bond, no more nor less.

KING LEAR

How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little, lest it may mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA

Good my lord, you have begot me, bred me, loved me.  
I return those duties back as are right fit, obey you, love you, and most honor you.  
Why have my sisters husbands if they say they love you all?  
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.

*issue* - children, *mettle* - quality of character, *felicitate* - made happy, *ponderous* - weighty,  
*validity* - value, *last and least* - youngest and smallest, *interested* - admitted, *plight* - pledge

KING LEAR

But goes thy heart with this?

CORDELIA

Ay, good my lord.

KING LEAR

So young, and so untender?

CORDELIA

So young, my lord, and true.

KING LEAR

Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower!

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun, the mysteries of Hecate\* 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.

KENT

Good my liege—

KING LEAR

Peace, Kent! Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

I loved her most, and thought to set my rest on her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!

So be my grave my peace as here I give her father's heart from her!

Call France. Who stirs? Call Burgundy. (*Exit a servant.*)

Cornwall and Albany, with my two daughters' dowers digest this third.

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.

I do invest you jointly with my power, preeminence, and all the large effects that troop with majesty.

Ourselves, by monthly course, with reservation of an hundred knights, by you to be sustained,  
shall our abode make with you by due turn.

Only we still retain the name, and all the addition\* to a king.

The sway, revenue, execution of the rest, beloved sons, be yours;  
which to confirm, this coronet\* part betwixt you.

(*Giving the coronet.*)

KENT

Royal Lear, whom I have ever honored as my King, loved as my father, as my master followed,  
as my great patron thought on in my prayers—

KING LEAR

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

**Hecate** - Goddess of witchcraft, **propinquity** - relationship, **addition** - titles and honors,  
**coronet** - symbol of rule; not necessarily the crown, **shaft** - arrow

KENT

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade the region of my heart.  
 What wouldst thou do, old man?  
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak when power to flattery bows?  
 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 sound reverb no hollowness.

KING LEAR

Kent, on thy life, no more!

KENT

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

KING LEAR

Out of my sight!

KENT

See better Lear, and let me still remain the true blank\* of thine eye.

KING LEAR

O, vassal! Miscreant!\*

*(Laying his hand on his sword.)*

ALBANY AND CORNWALL

Dear sir, forbear.

KENT

Do. Kill thy physician.  
 Revoke thy doom, or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat, I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

KING LEAR

Hear me, recreant!\* On thine allegiance, hear me! *(Kent kneels.)*  
 That thou hast sought to make us break our vow, which we durst never yet,  
 and with strained pride to come between our sentence and our power,  
 which nor our nature nor our place can bear, our potency made good, take thy reward.  
 Five days we do allot thee for provision to shield thee from 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.)*

**reserve thy state** - retain your kingly authority, **blank** - center of the target, where Lear should aim,  
**Miscreant** - unbeliever, **recreant** - traitor



The gods to their dear shelter take thee maid, that justly think'st and hast most rightly said.

*(To REGAN and GONERIL.)*

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 KENT.)*

*(Re enter GLOUCESTER, with KING OF FRANCE, BURGUNDY and attendants.)*

GLOUCESTER

Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

KING LEAR

My lord of Burgundy, we first address towards you, who with this King hath rivaled 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.

KING 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.

KING LEAR

Will you, with those infirmities she owes,\* unfriended, new-adopted to our hate, dowered with our curse,  
and strangered with our oath, take her, or leave her?

BURGUNDY

Pardon me, royal sir. Election makes not up on such conditions.

KING LEAR

Then leave her sir, for by the power that made me I tell you all her wealth.

*(To KING OF FRANCE.)*

For you, great King, I would not from your love make such a stray to match you where I hate;  
therefore beseech you to avert your liking a more worthier way  
than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed almost to acknowledge hers.

*approve* - prove, *effects* - consequences,  
*aught* - anything, *pieced* - joined, *owes* - owns

## KING OF 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 favor.

## CORDELIA

I yet beseech your majesty, that you make known it is no vicious blot, murder or foulness,  
no unchaste action or dishonored step, that hath deprived me of your grace and favor;  
but even for want of that for which I am richer a still-soliciting eye,  
and such a tongue as I am glad I have not, though not to have it hath lost me in your liking.

## KING LEAR

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

## KING OF 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 stand aloof from the 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.

## KING 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 respects of fortune are his love, I shall not be his wife.

## KING OF FRANCE

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor, most choice forsaken, and most loved despised.  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon. Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
Thy dowerless daughter King, thrown to my chance, is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.  
Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy can buy this unprized precious maid of me.  
Bid them farewell, Cordelia. Though unkind, thou losest here a better where to find.

## KING LEAR

Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we have no such daughter, nor shall ever see that face of hers again.  
Therefore be gone without our grace, our love, our benison.\*  
Come, noble Burgundy.

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

*balm* - something that heals and soothes, *trice* - moment, *tardiness in nature* - natural reserve, *benison* - blessing

KING OF 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.

Well may you prosper!

KING OF FRANCE

Come, my fair Cordelia.

*(Exeunt KING OF 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 to-night.

REGAN

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

GONERIL

You see how full of changes his age is. The observation we have made of it hath not been little.

He always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

REGAN

'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.

REGAN

Such unconstant starts\* are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.

*plighted* - pleaded; enfolded, *unconstant starts* - impulsive whims

GONERIL

There is further compliment of leave taking between France and him.

Pray you, let's 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 on it.

GONERIL

We must do something, and in the heat.\*

*(Exeunt)*

*in the heat* - i.e. while the iron is hot

## Act 1, Scene 2      The Earl of Gloucester's castle

(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 moon-shines 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 the 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 the legitimate.  
 Fine word, 'legitimate.'  
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed, and my invention thrive, Edmund the base shall top the legitimate.  
 I grow; I prosper. Now gods, stand up for bastards!

(Enter GLOUCESTER.)

GLOUCESTER

Kent banished thus and France in choler\* parted? And the King gone to-night? 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.

*stand...custom* - submit to diseased convention, *curiosity of nations* - nice distinctions of people, *lag* - younger than  
*composition* - robustness, *fierce* - thoroughbred, *fops* - fools, *got* - begot, *choler* - anger, *gad* - spur of the moment

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

Give me the letter, sir.

EDMUND

I shall offend, either to detain or give it.

GLOUCESTER

Let's see, let's see.

EDMUND

I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay\* 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.

Come to me, that of this I may speak more.

If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.'

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 this to you? Who brought it?

EDMUND

It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it. I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.\*

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

Hath he never before sounded you in this business?

*essay* - trial, *casement of my closet* - window of my room, *character* - handwriting, *matter* - contents, *respect of that* - considering the contents, *fain* - prefer to

EDMUND

Never, my lord.

But I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

GLOUCESTER

O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! I'll apprehend him. Where is he?

EDMUND

I do not well know, my lord.

I dare pawn down my life for him that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honor, and to no further pretence of danger.

GLOUCESTER

Think you so?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

He cannot be such a monster—

EDMUND

Nor is not, sure.

GLOUCESTER

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

*(Exit GLOUCESTER.)*

*meet* - appropriate, *auricular assurance* - proof heard with your own ears, *under the prediction* - included in these ill omens

EDMUND

This is the excellent foppery\* of the world,  
that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits\* of our own behavior,  
we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the 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 (*Enter EDGAR.*)

And pat he comes. My cue is villanous melancholy.  
O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! 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.

EDGAR

How long have you been a sectary astronomical?\*

EDMUND

When saw you my father last?

EDGAR

Why, the night gone by.

EDMUND

Spake you with him?

EDGAR

Ay, two hours together.

EDMUND

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

*foppery* - foolishness, *surfeits* - excesses, *treachers* - traitors,  
*goatish* - lecherous, "*Dragon's Tail and...Ursa Major*" - constellations,  
*sectary astronomical* - believer in astrology, *countenance* - facial expression



EDGAR

None at all.

EDMUND

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

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 EDMUND.)*

*allay* - be appeased, *meet* - proper; acceptable

### Act 1, Scene 3      The Duke of Albany's palace

(*GONERIL and OSWALD.*)

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.*)

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 dislike it, let him to our sister, whose mind and mine I know in that are one, not to be over-ruled.

Idle old man, that still would manage those authorities that he hath given away.

Remember what I tell you.

OSWALD

Well, madam.

GONERIL

And let his knights have colder looks among you. What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.

I'll write straight to my sister to hold my very course.\*

Prepare for dinner.

(*Exeunt.*)

*slack...services* - serve him less well than before, *hold my very course* - do the same

**Act 1, Scene 4      A hall in the same**

*(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 lovest shall find thee full of labors.

*(Enter KING LEAR, KNIGHT and attendants.)*

KING LEAR

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

*(Exit an attendant.)*

How now, what art thou?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough.  
What wouldst thou?

KENT

Service.

KING LEAR

Who wouldst thou serve?

KENT

You.

KING LEAR

Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

What's that?

KENT

Authority.

*defuse* - disguise, *razed my likeness* - erased my natural appearance

KING LEAR

What services canst thou do?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

How old art thou?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

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

*(Exit an attendant.)*

*(Enter OSWALD.)*

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

OSWALD

So please you—

*(Exit OSWALD.)*

KING LEAR

What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back.

*(Exit a KNIGHT.)*

Where's my fool? 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.

KING 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.

KING LEAR  
He would not?

KNIGHT  
My lord, I know not what the matter is;  
but to my judgment your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont.\*

KING LEAR  
Thou but rememberest 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 it.  
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.

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

*(Exit an attendant.)*

Go you, call hither my fool.

*(Exit an attendant.)*

*(Re enter OSWALD.)*

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

OSWALD  
My lady's father.

KING LEAR  
'My lady's father?' My lord's knave. You slave! You cur!

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

KING LEAR  
Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

*(KENT strikes OSWALD.)*

OSWALD  
I'll not be struck, my lord.

**wont** - accustomed to

KENT

Nor tripped neither, you base football player?

*(KENT trips OSWALD.)*

KING LEAR

I thank thee, fellow.

KENT

Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences.\* Away, away!

*(KENT pushes OSWALD out.)*

KING 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.\*

*(FOOL offers KENT his cap.)*

KING 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 favor.

How now, nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.

KING 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.

KING LEAR

Take heed, sirrah—the whip.

*differences* - distinctions in rank, *coxcomb* - fool's hat, *nuncle* - mine uncle

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

A bitter fool.

FOOL

Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

KING 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.

KING 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

Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.

KING LEAR

What two crowns shall they be?

FOOL

Why, after I have cut the egg in the middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg.  
Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown, when thou gavest 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 wit in a year;  
For wise men are grown foppish,  
They know not how their wits to wear,  
Their manners are so apish.\*

*Lady Brach* - bitch; female dog, *motley* - a fool's patched clothing,  
*fools...apish* - fools were never less in favor than now, because wise men are grown so foolish,  
they make professional fools redundant.

KING LEAR

When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?

FOOL

I have used it, Nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers;  
for when thou gavest them the rod, and put'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.

KING 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 of thing than a fool, and yet I would not be thee, nuncle:

thou hast pared thy wit on both sides, and left nothing in the middle.

Here comes one of the parings.

(*Enter GONERIL.*)

KING LEAR

How now, daughter! What makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much of late in the 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.

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.

FOOL

For you know, Nuncle, the hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo\* so long, that it's had it head bit off by it young.

KING LEAR

Are you our daughter?

*carp* - find fault pettily, *rank* - indecent, *safe* - sure, *cuckoo* - the cuckoo lays its eggs in the nests of other



GONERIL

Come sir, I would you would make use of that good wisdom whereof I know you are fraught\* and put away these dispositions which of late transform you from what you rightly are.

FOOL

May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?  
Whoop Jug, I love thee!\*

KING LEAR

Does any here know me?  
This is not Lear. Doth Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

FOOL

Lear's shadow.

KING LEAR

I would learn that.  
Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GONERIL

This admiration, sir, is much of the savor of other your new pranks.  
I do beseech you to understand my purposes aright.  
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires, men so disordered, so debauched and bold,  
that this our court, infected with their manners, shows like a riotous inn.  
Epicurism\* and lust make it more like a tavern or a brothel than a graced palace.  
The shame itself doth speak for instant remedy.  
Be then desired by her, that else will take the thing she begs, a little to disquantity your train,  
and the remainder that shall still depend, to be such men as may besort your age,  
which know themselves and you.

KING LEAR

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

GONERIL

You strike my people, and your disordered rabble make servants of their betters.

*(Enter ALBANY.)*

KING LEAR

Woe that too late repents—

*(To ALBANY.)*

*fraught* - endowed, *Whoop Jug, I love thee!* - some catch phrase, *epicurism* - loose living

O sir, are you come? Is it your will? Speak sir.  
Prepare my horses.

ALBANY  
Pray sir, be patient.

KING 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.  
O Lear, Lear, Lear, beat at this gate, (*Striking his head.*) that let thy folly in and thy dear judgment out!  
Go, go, my people.

(*All KING LEAR'S people except the FOOL exit.*)

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

KING LEAR  
It may be so, my lord.  
Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear: suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend to make this creature fruitful.  
Into her womb convey sterility, dry up in her the organs of increase,  
and from her derogate body never spring a babe to honor her.  
If she must teem,\* 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!

(*Exeunt KING LEAR and FOOL.*)

ALBANY  
Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

GONERIL  
Never afflict yourself to know the cause, but let his disposition have that scope as dotage gives it.

(*Re-enter KING LEAR.*)

KING LEAR  
What, fifty of my followers at a clap? Within a fortnight?\*

ALBANY  
What's the matter, sir?

*kite* - scavenging bird of prey, *teem* - conceive, *spleen* - malice; spite; bad temper, *fortnight* - two weeks

KING LEAR

(*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. Let it be so. Yet have I left a daughter, who I am sure is kind and comfortable. When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails she'll flay thy wolvisch visage.\* Thou shalt find that I'll resume the shape which thou dost think I have cast off for ever. Thou shalt, I warrant thee.

(*Exit KING LEAR.*)

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!

A hundred knights!

'Tis politic and safe to let him keep at point a hundred knights and with their powers hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say!

ALBANY

Well, you may fear too far.

GONERIL

Safer than trust too far.

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 the unfitness—

(*Re enter OSWALD.*)

How now, Oswald? 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 tasked for want of wisdom than praised for harmful mildness.

*visage* - face

ALBANY

How far your eyes may pierce I can not tell; striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

GONERIL

Nay then—

ALBANY

Well, well; the event.

*(Exeunt.)*

**Act 1, Scene 5    Courtyard before Albany's castle**

*(Enter KING LEAR, KENT and FOOL.)*

KING LEAR

Go you before to Cornwall with these letters.

Acquaint my daughter no further with any thing 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 KENT.)*

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.

KING LEAR

What canst thou tell, my boy?

FOOL

She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab.

Thou canst tell why one's nose stands in the middle one's face?

KING LEAR

No.

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

I did her wrong.

FOOL

Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

KING LEAR

No.

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

Why?

*crab* - crab apple

FOOL

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

KING 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.

KING LEAR

Because they are not eight?

FOOL

Yes, indeed. Thou wouldst make a good fool.

KING LEAR

Monster ingratitude!

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

How's that?

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

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

*(Enter GENTLEMAN.)*

How now, are the horses ready?

GENTLEMAN

Ready, my lord.

KING LEAR

Come, boy.

*(Exeunt.)*

*horns* - (of a cuckold), *nature* - paternal instincts

## Act 2, Scene 1 Gloucester's castle

*(Enter EDMUND, and CURAN meets him.)*

EDMUND  
Save thee, Curan.

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

*(Exit CURAN.)*

EDMUND  
The Duke be here to-night? The better. Best!  
My father hath set guard to take my brother, and I have one thing of a queasy question which I must act.  
Briefness and fortune, work.  
Brother, a word; descend. Brother, I say!

*(Enter EDGAR.)*

My father watches. O sir, fly this place. Intelligence is given where you are hid.  
You have now the good advantage of the night.  
Have you not spoken against the Duke of Cornwall? He's coming hither; and Regan with him. Advise yourself.

EDGAR  
I am sure of it, not a word.

EDMUND  
I hear my father coming.  
Pardon me. In cunning I must draw my sword upon you. Draw, seem to defend yourself.  
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 endeavor.

*(EDMUND 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.)*

**beget opinion** - create the impression

GLOUCESTER

Now Edmund, where's the villain?

EDMUND

Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out, mumbling of wicked charms—

GLOUCESTER

But where is he?

EDMUND

Look sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDMUND

Fled this way, sir, when by no means he could—

GLOUCESTER

Pursue him! Go after.

*(Exit some servants.)*

By no means what?

EDMUND

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship.

But that I told him the revenging gods against parricides\* did all their thunder bend.\*

GLOUCESTER

Let him fly far. Not in this land shall he remain uncaught.

*(Horns 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 the 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! I have heard strange news.

REGAN

If it be true, all vengeance comes too short which can pursue the offender.

How dost, my lord?

*parricides* - those who murder their parents, *bend* - aim, *capable* - able to inherit



GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad.

EDMUND

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.\*

REGAN

No marvel then. 'Tis they have put him on the old man's death.

I have this present evening from my sister been well informed of them, and with such cautions, that if they come to sojourn at my house, I'll not be there.

CORNWALL

Nor I, assure thee, Regan.

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father a child-like\* office.

EDMUND

'Twas 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.

For you, Edmund, 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.

*consort* - company, *child-like* - filial, *bewray his practice* - expose his plot

GLOUCESTER

For him I thank your grace.

CORNWALL

You know not why we came to visit you?

REGAN

Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister, of differences, which I best thought it fit to answer from\* our home.  
Our good old friend, bestow your needful counsel to our business, which craves the instant use.

GLOUCESTER

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

*(Exeunt.)*

*from* - away from

## Act 2, 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?

KENT

In the mire.

OSWALD

Prithee, if thou lovest 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, glass-gazing, super-serviceable finical\* rogue;  
 one that art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch.  
 One whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.

*Lipbury Pinfold* - slang for between my teeth, *broken meats* - scraps,  
*three-suited* - owner of three suits (the wardrobe allowed serving-men),  
*hundred pound* - minimum wealth for those aspiring to gentility,  
*glass gazing, super serviceable finical* - conceited, toadying, foppish

OSWALD

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

KENT

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

*(Drawing his sword.)*

OSWALD

Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

KENT

Draw, you rascal. You come with letters against the King.  
Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado\* your shanks.\* Draw, you rascal.

OSWALD

Help, ho! Murder! Help!

KENT

Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue! Stand! You neat\* slave, strike!

*(KENT beats OSWALD.)*

OSWALD

Help, ho! Murder! Murder!

*(Enter EDMUND, with his rapier drawn, CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER and servants.)*

EDMUND

How now! What's the matter?

GLOUCESTER

Weapons? Arms? What 's the matter here?

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

The messengers from our sister and the King.

CORNWALL

What is your difference? Speak.

OSWALD

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

*varlet* - scoundrel, *carbonado* - cut into strips, *shanks* - lower legs, *neat* - primping

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 gray beard, you wagtail?\*

CORNWALL

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

KENT

Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege.

CORNWALL

Why art thou angry?

KENT

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

CORNWALL

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 a knave? What's his offence?

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.

He cannot flatter, he, an honest mind and plain, he must speak truth.

(*To OSWALD.*) What was the offence you gave him?

*zed* - last and least useful letter, *daub* - smear, *jakes* - privy; outhouse,

*wagtail* - a bird that bobs his tail up and down, suggesting effeminacy

OSWALD

I never gave him any.

It pleased the King his master very late\* to strike at me, upon his misconstruction;  
when he, tripped me behind, and put upon him such a deal of man that got praises of the King.  
And now, in the fleshment of\* this dread exploit, drew on me here again.

CORNWALL

Fetch forth the stocks!\*

You stubborn ancient knave, 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 against the grace and person of my master, stocking his messenger.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

Till noon? Till night, my lord, and all night too.

KENT

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

REGAN

Sir, being his knave, I will.

CORNWALL

This is a fellow of the self same color our sister speaks of. Come, bring the stocks!

*(Stocks brought out.)*

GLOUCESTER

Let me beseech your grace not to do so.

The King must take it ill, that he's so slightly valued in his messenger, should have him thus restrained.

CORNWALL

I'll answer that.

REGAN

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

*(KENT is put in the stocks.)*

Come, my good lord, away!

*very late* - quite recently, *fleshment of* - bloodthirstiness induced by,  
*stocks* - wooden frame with holes for confining an offender's ankles

*(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.  
Give you good morrow.

GLOUCESTER

The Duke's to blame in this. 'Twill be ill taken.

*(Exit GLOUCESTER.)*

KENT

Take vantage,\* heavy eyes, not to behold this shameful lodging.  
Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy wheel.

*(KENT sleeps.)*

*rubbed* - deflected , *vantage* - advantage of sleep

**Act 2, 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 out face 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 EDGAR.)*

*penury* - poverty, *Bedlam* - insane asylum in London; mad, insane,  
*object* - picture, *pelting* - paltry, *bans* - curses  
*Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom* - Edgar recites names Bedlam beggars give themselves



**Act 2, Scene 4 Before Gloucester's castle. Kent in the stocks**

*(Enter KING LEAR, FOOL and GENTLEMAN.)*

KING LEAR

'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,\* and not send back my messenger.

KENT

Hail to thee, noble master.

KING LEAR

Ha! Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

KENT

No, my lord.

FOOL

Ha, ha! He wears cruel garters.

KING 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.

KING LEAR

No.

KENT

Yes.

KING LEAR

No, I say.

KENT

I say, yea.

KING LEAR

No, no, they would not.

KENT

Yes, they have.

KING LEAR

By Jupiter, I swear no!

*home* - Cornwall's castle (Lear, like Kent and Oswald before him, has had to follow Regan and Cornwall to Gloucester's castle)

KENT

By Juno, I swear ay!

KING LEAR

They durst not do it; they could not, would not do it.

'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, meeting here the very fellow that of late displayed so saucily against your Highness, having more man than wit about me, drew. He raised the house with loud and coward cries.

Your son and daughter found this trespass worth the shame which here it suffers.

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

O, how this *hysterica passio*\* swells up toward my heart! Down, thou climbing sorrow.

Where is this daughter?

KENT

With the Earl, sir, here within.

KING LEAR

Follow me not; stay here.

*(Exit LEAR.)*

GENTLEMAN

Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

KENT

None.

How chance the King comes with so small a number?

FOOL

And thou hadst been set in the stocks for that question, thou hadst well deserved it.

KENT

Why, fool?

FOOL

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.

*hysterica passio* - hysteria

KENT

Where learned you this, fool?

FOOL

Not in the stocks, fool.

*(Re enter KING LEAR with GLOUCESTER.)*

KING LEAR

Deny to speak with me? They are sick, they are weary, they have travelled all the night?  
Mere fetches.\* 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.

KING 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.

KING LEAR

Informed them? Dost thou understand me, man?

GLOUCESTER

Ay, my good lord.

KING LEAR

The King would speak with Cornwall. The dear father would with his daughter speak, commands her service.  
Are they informed of this? My breath and blood! Fiery? The fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that—  
no, but not yet. May be he is not well. Infirmity doth still neglect all office whereto our health is bound.  
*(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 his 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.

GLOUCESTER

I would have all well betwixt you.

*(Exit GLOUCESTER.)*

KING 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 in the paste\* alive.

*fetches* - excuses, *remotion* - removal; remaining remote, *paste* - pastry pie

She knapped 'em on the coxcombs with a stick, and cried, 'Down, wantons, down!'

*(Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER and servants.)*

KING LEAR

Good morrow to you both.

CORNWALL

Hail to your grace.

*(KENT is set at liberty.)*

REGAN

I am glad to see your highness.

KING LEAR

Regan, I think you are.

*(To KENT.)* O, are you free? Some other time for that.

Beloved Regan, thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here. I can scarce speak to thee. Thou wilt 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.\*

KING 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.

KING LEAR

My curses on her!

REGAN

O, sir, you are old.

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.

KING LEAR

Ask her forgiveness? Do you but mark how this becomes the house:\*

'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old.

*(Kneeling.)* On my knees I beg that you'll vouchsafe me raiment,\* bed and food.'

*have hope* - suspect, *value...duty* - give Goneril credit than she would fail in her duties,

*house* - family decorum, *raiment* - clothing

REGAN

Good sir, no more. These are unsightly tricks. Return you to my sister.

KING LEAR

*(Rising.)* Never, Regan. She hath abated me of half my train, looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue most serpent-like upon the very heart.

All the stored vengeances of heaven fall on her ingrateful top!

Strike her young bones, you taking airs, with lameness!

CORNWALL

Fie, sir, fie!

KING 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.

KING LEAR

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse. Thy tender-hefted\* nature shall not give thee over to harshness.

Her eyes are fierce, but thine do comfort, and not burn.

Thou better knowest the offices of nature,\* bond of childhood, effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude.

Thy half of the kingdom hast thou not forgot, wherein I thee endowed.

REGAN

Good sir, to the purpose.

KING LEAR

Who put my man in the stocks?

*(Horns within.)*

CORNWALL

What trumpet's that?

REGAN

I know it my sister's. This approves her letter, that she would soon be here.

*(Enter OSWALD.)*

Is your lady come?

KING LEAR

This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.

Out, varlet, from my sight!

*tender-hefted* - gently disposed, *offices of nature* - natural duties

CORNWALL

What means your grace?

KING LEAR

Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope thou didst not know on it.

Who comes here? (*Enter GONERIL.*) O heavens!

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway allow obedience, if yourselves are old, make it your cause.

Send down, and take my part!

(*To GONERIL.*) Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?

O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

GONERIL

Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended? All's not offence that indiscretion finds and dotage terms\* so.

KING LEAR

O sides, you are too tough! Will you yet hold?

How came my man in the stocks?

CORNWALL

I set him there, sir, but his own disorders deserved much less advancement.

KING LEAR

You! Did you?

REGAN

I pray you, father, 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.

KING LEAR

Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?

No, rather I abjure\* all roofs, and choose to wage\* against the enmity of the air.

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.

KING LEAR

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.

I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell. We'll no more meet, no more see one another.

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;

or rather a disease that's in my flesh, which I must needs call mine.

Thou art a boil, a plague-sore, an embossed\* carbuncle, in my corrupted blood.

*dotage terms* - old age calls, *abjure* - give up on oath, *wage* - fight, *sumpter* - packhorse, *embossed* - risen to a head

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; she knows what she does.

KING LEAR

Is this well spoken?

REGAN

I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers? Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge\* and danger speak against 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 you, 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.

KING LEAR

I gave you all.

REGAN

And in good time you gave it.

KING LEAR

Made you my guardians, my depositaries,\* but kept a reservation to be followed with such a number.  
What, must I come to you with five and twenty, Regan, said you so?

REGAN

And speak it again, my lord. No more with me.

KING LEAR

Those wicked creatures yet do look well favored when others are more wicked.  
Not being the worst stands in some rank of praise.  
(*To GONERIL.*) I'll go with thee. Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty, and thou art twice her love.

GONERIL

Hear me, my lord. What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,  
to follow in a house where twice so many have a command to tend you?

REGAN

What need one?

*charge* - expense, *amity* - peaceful relations, *depositaries* - trustees

KING LEAR

O, reason! Not the need? Allow not nature more than nature needs. Man's life is cheap as beast's.  
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.

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 KING LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT and FOOL.)*

*(Storm and tempest.)*

CORNWALL

Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

REGAN

This house is little; the old man and his people cannot be well bestowed.

GONERIL

'Tis his own blame.

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. He is returned.

*(Re enter GLOUCESTER.)*

GLOUCESTER

The King is in high rage.

CORNWALL

Whither is he going?

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

'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 willful 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, wisdom bids fear.

CORNWALL

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

*(Exeunt.)*

## Act 3, Scene 1      A heath

*(Storm still. Enter KENT and a GENTLEMAN meeting.)*

KENT

Who's there besides foul weather?

GENTLEMAN

One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

KENT

I know you. Where's the King?

GENTLEMAN

Unbonneted he runs, contending with the fretful elements, and bids what will take all.

KENT

But who is with him?

GENTLEMAN

None but the fool, who labors to out-jest his heart-struck injuries.

KENT

Sir, I do know you, and dare commend a dear thing\* to you.

There is division, although as yet the face of it be covered with mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall.

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.

If on my credit you dare build so far to make your speed to Dover,

you shall find some that will thank you for making just report of how unnatural the King hath cause to plain.\*

If you shall see Cordelia, as fear not but you shall, show her this ring,

and she will tell you who your fellow is that yet you do not know.

GENTLEMAN

Give me your hand.

KENT

Fie on this storm! I will go seek the King.

*(Exeunt in different directions.)*

*commend...thing* - entrust a precious matter, *plain* - complain

**Act 3, Scene 2    Another part of the heath. Storm still***(Enter KING LEAR and FOOL.)*

KING LEAR

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

You cataracts\* and hurricanoes,\* spout till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks.\*

You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, vaunt-couriers\* to oak-cleaving thunderbolts, singe my white head.

And thou, all-shaking thunder, smite flat the thick rotundity of the world!

Crack Nature's molds,\* all germains\* spill at once, that make ingrateful man.

FOOL

Good nuncle, in; and ask thy daughters' blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise man nor fool.

KING LEAR

Rumble thy bellyful. Spit, fire! Spout, rain!

Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness. I never gave you kingdom, called you children.

Then let fall your horrible pleasure.

FOOL

He that has a house to put's head in has a good head-piece.

KING LEAR

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

*(Enter KENT.)*

KENT

Who's there?

FOOL

A wise man and a fool.

KENT

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

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.

KING LEAR

Let the great gods that keep this dreadful pudder\* over our heads find out their enemies now.

Tremble, thou wretch, that hast within thee undivulged crimes unwhipped of justice.

I am a man more sinned against than sinning.

KENT

Alack, bare-headed?

*cataracts* - waterfalls, *hurricanoes* - waterspouts, *cocks* - weather vane, *vaunt-couriers* - heralds,  
*molds* - molds or forms in which men are made, *germains* - seeds, *pudder* - turmoil

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel. Some friendship will it lend you against the tempest.  
Repose you there, while I to this hard house return and force their scanted courtesy.

KING 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, that 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 heigh-ho, the wind and the rain,  
Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
For the rain it raineth every day.

KING LEAR

True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.

*(Exeunt.)*

### Act 3, Scene 3 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 their 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's a division betwixt the Dukes, and a worse matter than that.  
I have received a letter this night—'tis dangerous to be spoken—I have locked the letter in my closet.  
These injuries the King now bears will be revenged home.\*  
There's part of a power already footed. We must incline to the King.  
I will seek him and privily 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.  
Edmund; pray you be careful.

*(Exit GLOUCESTER.)*

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 EDMUND.)*

*home* - thoroughly, *courtesy* - (towards Lear)

**Act 3, Scene 4 The heath. Before a hovel**

*(Enter KING LEAR, KENT and FOOL.)*

KENT

Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.

KING LEAR

Let me alone.

KENT

Good my lord, enter here.

KING LEAR

Wilt break my heart?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm invades us to the skin.

But where the greater malady is fixed the lesser is scarce felt.

The tempest in my mind doth from my senses take all feeling else save what beats there—filial ingratitude.

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, Goneril, your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all—

O, that way madness lies; let me shun that. No more of that.

KENT

Good my lord, enter here.

KING LEAR

Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease.

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder on things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.

*(To the FOOL.)* In, boy; go first. Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

*(FOOL goes in.)*

Poor naked wretches, 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 taken too little care of this!

Take physic,\* pomp;\* expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,

that thou mayest shake the superflux\* to them and show the heavens more just.

EDGAR

*(Within.)* Fathom and half,\* fathom and half! Poor Tom!

*Take physic* - cure yourself, *pomp* - vainglorious one, *superflux* - superfluidity; excess,

*Fathom and half* - a nautical term for taking soundings, perhaps describing the deluge

*(The FOOL runs out 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 in the straw? Come forth.

*(Enter EDGAR disguised as a mad man.)*

EDGAR

Away! The foul fiend\* follows me!

Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.

Hum! Go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

KING LEAR

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

EDGAR

Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame,  
through ford and whirlpool, over bog and quagmire.

Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold. O, do de, do de, do de.

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.)*

KING LEAR

What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?

Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air hang fated over men's faults light on thy daughters!

KENT

He hath no daughters, sir.

*foul fiend* - the devil

KING 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.\* Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

FOOL

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

KING LEAR

What hast thou been?

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.\*  
Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind; says suum, mun, nonny.

*(Storm still.)*

KING LEAR

Thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.  
Is man no more than this? Consider him well.  
Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume.  
Ha! Here's three of us 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.

*(LEAR starts tearing off his clothes.)*

FOOL

Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in.  
Look, here comes a walking fire.

*(Enter GLOUCESTER with a torch.)*

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 hare-lip.  
Arroint thee,\* witch, arroint thee!

*pelican* - the young supposedly feed on the blood of the parents,

*Pillicock* - nursery rhyme, *out paramoured the Turk* - had more mistresses than the Sultan,

*Flibbertigibbet* - a dancing devil,

*web and the pin* - cataract of the eye, *squints* - crosses, *Arroint thee* - get thee gone



KENT

How fares your grace?

KING LEAR

What's he?

KENT

Who's there? What is it you seek?

GLOUCESTER

What are you there? Your names?

EDGAR

Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall newt and the water;  
that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets.\*  
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 to obey in all your daughters' hard commands.  
Though their injunction be to bar my doors and let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,  
yet have I ventured to come seek you out and bring you where both fire and food is ready.

KING LEAR

First let me talk with this philosopher. What is the cause of thunder?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.\* What is your study?

EDGAR

How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

*sallets* - salads, *Smulkin* - another devil, *Modu, Mahu* - more devils, *Theban* - i.e. a Greek philosopher

KING LEAR

Let me ask you one word in private.

KENT

Importune him once more to go, my lord; his wits begin to unsettle.

GLOUCESTER

Canst thou blame him? His daughters seek his death.

*(Storm still.)*

*(To LEAR.)* I do beseech your grace—

KING LEAR

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

EDGAR

Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

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

KING LEAR

Come let's in all.

KENT

This way, my lord.

KING LEAR

With him! I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

Take him you on.

KENT

Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

KING LEAR

Come, good Athenian.

GLOUCESTER

No words, no words. Hush.

*(Exeunt.)*

**Act 3, Scene 5 Gloucester's castle**

*(Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND.)*

CORNWALL

I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

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.

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.)*

*his* - Cornwall's

**Act 3, Scene 6    A chamber in a farmhouse adjoining the castle**

*(Enter GLOUCESTER, KING LEAR, KENT, FOOL and EDGAR.)*

GLOUCESTER

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

KENT

The gods reward your kindness!

*(Exit GLOUCESTER.)*

KING LEAR

To have a thousand with red burning spits come hissing in upon 'em.

EDGAR

The foul fiend bites my back.

KING LEAR

It shall be done; I will arraign\* them straight.

*(To EDGAR.)* Come, sit thou here, most learned justice.

*(To the FOOL)* Thou, sapient\* sir, sit here.

Now, you she foxes!

EDGAR

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

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

*(To EDGAR.)* Thou robed man of justice, take thy place.

*(To the FOOL.)* And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, bench by his side.

*(To KENT.)* You are of the commission; sit you too.

EDGAR

Let us deal justly.

KING LEAR

Arraign her first. 'Tis Goneril.

I here take my oath before this honorable assembly, she kicked the poor King her father.

FOOL

Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

*arraign* - bring to trial, *sapient* - discerning; often ironical

KING LEAR

She cannot deny it.

FOOL

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

KING 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 thou so oft have boasted to retain?

EDGAR

*(Aside.)* My tears begin to take his part so much they mar my counterfeiting.\*

KING LEAR

The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart—see, they bark at me.

EDGAR

Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt,\* you curs!

KING LEAR

Then let them anatomize\* Regan. See what breeds about her heart.

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

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

You will say they are Persian; but let them be changed.

KENT

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

KING LEAR

Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains. So, so, so.

We'll go to supper in the morning.

FOOL

And I'll go to bed at noon.

*(Re enter GLOUCESTER.)*

GLOUCESTER

Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?

*store* - stuff, *mar my counterfeiting* - impair my simulating madness, *Avaunt* - be gone, *anatomize* - dissect

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

Good friend, I prithee take him in thy arms. I have overheard a plot of death upon him.

There is a litter\* ready; lay him in it and drive towards Dover, friend,  
where thou shalt meet both welcome and protection. 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.

KENT

*(To the FOOL.)* Come, help to bear thy master. Thou must not stay behind.

GLOUCESTER

Come, come, away!

*(Exeunt all but EDGAR.)*

EDGAR

How light and portable my pain seems now, when that which makes me bend makes the King bow.

Tom, away! Mark the high noises.

What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the King!

Lurk, lurk.

*(Exit EDGAR.)*

*litter* - stretcher

## Act 3, Scene 7 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 villain Gloucester.

*(Exeunt some of the servants.)*

REGAN

Hang him instantly.

GONERIL

Pluck out his eyes.

CORNWALL

Leave him to my displeasure.  
Edmund, keep you our sister company.  
The revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding.  
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, are gone with him towards Dover,  
where they boast to have well-armed friends.

CORNWALL

Get horses for your mistress.

GONERIL

Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

CORNWALL

Edmund, farewell.

*(Exeunt GONERIL, EDMUND and OSWALD.)*

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

*(Exeunt other SERVANTS.)*

Though well we may not pass upon his life without the form of justice,\*

*not pass...justice* - not execute him without a trial

yet our power shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men may blame, but not control.

*(Enter GLOUCESTER and SERVANTS.)*

Who's there? The traitor?

REGAN

Ingrateful fox, 'tis he.

CORNWALL

Bind fast his corky arms.

GLOUCESTER

What mean your graces? Good my friends, consider you are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

CORNWALL

Bind him, I say.

*(SERVANTS bind him.)*

REGAN

Hard, hard! O filthy traitor.

GLOUCESTER

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

CORNWALL

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

*(REGAN plucks his beard.)*

GLOUCESTER

By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done to pluck me by the beard.

REGAN

So white, and such a traitor?

GLOUCESTER

Naughty lady, these hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin will quicken\* and accuse thee.  
What will you do?

CORNWALL

Come sir, what letters had you late from France?

REGAN

Be simple-answered, for we know the truth.

*quicken* - come to life



CORNWALL

And what confederacy have you with the traitors late footed\* in the kingdom?

REGAN

To whose hands have you 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 first answer that.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover?

GLOUCESTER

Because I would not see thy cruel nails pluck out his poor old eyes;  
nor thy fierce sister in his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.  
But I shall see the winged vengeance overtake such children.

CORNWALL

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

GLOUCESTER

He that will think to live till he be old, give me some help!  
(*CORNWALL plucks out one of GLOUCESTER'S eyes.*) O cruel! O you gods!

*late footed* - recently landed

*stake...course* - a bearbaiting reference where a bear chained to a post must defend himself against attacking dogs

REGAN

One side will mock another. The other too.

CORNWALL

If you see vengeance—

FIRST SERVANT

Hold your hand, my lord.

I have served you ever since I was a child; but better service have I never done you than now to bid you hold.

REGAN

How now, you dog?

FIRST SERVANT

If you did wear a beard upon your chin, I'd shake it on this quarrel.

REGAN

What do you mean?

CORNWALL

My villain!

*(They draw their swords.)*

FIRST SERVANT

Nay then, come on, and take the chance of anger.

*(They fight.)*

REGAN

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?

*(Takes a sword, and runs at him behind.)*

FIRST SERVANT

O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left to see some mischief on him. O! *(Dies.)*

CORNWALL

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly! *(CORNWALL plucks out GLOUCESTER'S other eye.)*

Where is thy lustre now?

GLOUCESTER

All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature to quit\* this horrid act.

*quit* - avenge

REGAN

Out, treacherous villain; thou call'st on him that hates thee.  
It was he that made the overture of thy treasons to us.

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.

*(Exeunt servant with GLOUCESTER.)*

How is it, my lord? How look you?

CORNWALL

I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.  
Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave upon the dunghill.  
Regan, I bleed apace. Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

*(Exeunt.)*

**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.  
Welcome then, thou unsubstantial air that I embrace.  
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst owes nothing to thy blasts.  
But who comes here?

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

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

OLD MAN

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

GLOUCESTER

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

OLD MAN

You cannot see your way.

GLOUCESTER

I have no way, and therefore want\* no eyes; I stumbled when I saw.  
O dear son Edgar, 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 it 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?

*contemned* - despised, *esperance* - hope, *want* - need

OLD MAN

Madman and beggar too.

GLOUCESTER

He has some reason, else he could not beg.

In the last night's storm I such a fellow saw, 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 the gods; they kill us for their sport.

EDGAR

Bless thee, master.

GLOUCESTER

Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN

Ay, my lord.

GLOUCESTER

Then prithee get thee gone.

If for my sake thou wilt overtake us hence a mile or twain on the way toward Dover,  
bring some covering for this naked soul, who 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.

*(Exit OLD MAN.)*

GLOUCESTER

Sirrah, naked fellow—

EDGAR

Poor Tom's a cold. *(Aside.)* I cannot daub\* it further.

GLOUCESTER

Come hither, fellow.

*parel* - clothing, *daub* - act the part

EDGAR

*(Aside.)* And yet I must.

Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Knowest thou the way to Dover?

EDGAR

Both stile\* and gate, horse-way and foot path.

Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits.

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!

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.)*

*stile* - a set of steps used to climb over a wall

## Act 4, Scene 2 Before Albany's palace

*(Enter GONERIL and EDMUND.)*

GONERIL

I marvel our mild husband not met us on the way.

*(Enter OSWALD.)*

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.

Back, Edmund, to my brother and conduct his powers. This trusty servant shall pass between us.

Ere long you are like to hear, if you dare venture in your own behalf, a mistress's command.

Wear this. Spare speech. *(Giving a favor.)* 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; my fool usurps my body.

OSWALD

Madam, here comes my lord.

*(Exit OSWALD.)*

*(Enter ALBANY.)*

GONERIL

I have been worth the whistle.\*

*sot* - fool, *worth the whistle* - valued enough to be welcomed home

ALBANY

O Goneril, you are not worth the dust which the rude wind blows in your face.  
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 madded.

GONERIL

Milk-livered man, that bearest a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs.  
Where's thy drum? France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
whiles thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries 'Alack, why does he so?'

ALBANY

See thyself, devil. Proper\* deformity seems not in the fiend so horrid as in woman.

GONERIL

O vain fool!

ALBANY

Were it my fitness to let these hands obey my blood, they are apt to tear thy flesh and bones.  
However a woman's shape doth shield thee.

GONERIL

Marry, your manhood, mew.

*(Enter a MESSENGER.)*

ALBANY

What news?

MESSENGER

O, my 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

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.  
I'll read, and answer.

*(Exit GONERIL.)*

ALBANY

Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

*head-lugged* - dragged with a chain, and therefore surly, *proper* - fair appearing



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 knowest.

*(Exeunt.)*

*back* - on his way back

#### **Act 4, Scene 4    The French camp near Dover.    A tent**

*(Enter with drum and colors, CORDELIA, DOCTOR and soldiers.)*

CORDELIA

Alack, 'tis he. He was met even now as mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud,  
crowned with rank fumiter, cuckoo-flowers, and all the idle weeds that grow in our sustaining corn.  
Search every acre in the high-grown field and bring him to our eye.

*(Exit an officer.)*

What can man do in the restoring of his bereaved sense?

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 of the earth, spring with my tears.

*(Enter a MESSENGER.)*

MESSENGER

News, madam. The British powers are marching hitherward.

CORDELIA

'Tis known before; and though my lord, the King of France, had needs return to France,  
our preparation stands in expectation of them.  
O dear father, it is thy business that I go about. Soon may I hear and see him!

*(Exeunt.)*

*simples operative* - medicinal herbs; sedatives

**Act 4, Scene 5 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, 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

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out to let him live. Where he arrives he moves all against us. Edmund is gone to dispatch his nighted\* life and to descry\* the strength of the enemy.

OSWALD

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

REGAN

Our troops set forth to morrow. Stay with us. The ways are dangerous.

OSWALD

I may not, madam. My lady charged my duty in this business.

REGAN

Why should she write to Edmund? Let me unseal the letter.

OSWALD

Madam, I had rather—

*nighted* - blinded, *descry* - discover

REGAN

I know your lady does not love her husband; I am sure of that;  
and at her late being here she gave strange oeillades\* and most speaking looks to noble Edmund.  
Therefore I do advise you, take this note.

My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talked, and more convenient is he for my hand than for your lady's.  
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;  
and when your mistress hears thus much from you, I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.  
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.)*

*oeillades* - amorous glances

## Act 4, Scene 6 Fields near Dover

(Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR, dressed like a peasant.)

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.

GLOUCESTER

Methinks the ground is even.

EDGAR

Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

GLOUCESTER

No, truly.

EDGAR

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

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.

Half way down hangs one that gathers sampire,\* 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 the unnumbered idle pebbles chafes cannot be heard so high.

I'll look no more, lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight topple down headlong.

GLOUCESTER

Set me where you stand.

*choughs* - jackdaws, *sampire* - samphire (aromatic herb used in relishes), *bark* - boat,

*diminished to her cock* - reduced to the size of her cockboat, her rowboat, *murmuring surge* - sound of waves on the shore

EDGAR

Give me your hand.

You are now within a foot of the extreme verge. For all beneath the moon would I not leap upright.\*

GLOUCESTER

Let go my hand.

Here, friend is another purse; in it a jewel well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies and gods prosper it with thee.

Go thou farther off.

Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

EDGAR

Now fare you well, good sir.

GLOUCESTER

With all my heart.

EDGAR

*(Aside.)* Why I do trifle thus with his despair is done to cure it.

*(GLOUCESTER kneels.)*

GLOUCESTER

O you mighty gods! This world I do renounce, and in your sights shake patiently my great affliction off.

If Edgar live, O, bless him!

*(He falls forward.)*

EDGAR

*(Aside.)* Had he been where he thought, by this had thought been past.

Alive or dead? Ho, you sir! Friend! Hear you, sir? Speak!

*(Aside.)* 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?

*upright* - i.e. even upright, let alone forward

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?

EDGAR

Give me your arm. Up. So. How is it? Feel you your legs? You stand.

GLOUCESTER

Too well, too well.

EDGAR

This is above all strangeness. Upon the crown of the cliff what thing was that which parted from you?

GLOUCESTER

A poor unfortunate beggar.

EDGAR

As I stood here below, methought his eyes were two full moons;

he had a thousand noses, horns whelked\* and waved like the enridged sea. It was some fiend.

Therefore, thou happy father, think that the clearest gods have preserved thee.

GLOUCESTER

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.

But who comes here?

*(Enter KING LEAR, fantastically dressed with wild flowers.)*

KING LEAR

No, they cannot touch me for coining;\* I am the King himself.

EDGAR

O thou side-piercing sight!

KING 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 it.

There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant.

*bourne* - headland, *gorged* - throated, *whelked* - twisted, *touch me for coining* - arrest me for minting coins,

*press-money* - paid to conscripted soldiers, *crow-keeper* - a farmer scaring away crows,

*clothier's yard* - i.e. arrow (normally a yard long)

O, well flown, bird. In the clout,\* in the clout. Hewgh!  
Give the word.

EDGAR  
Sweet marjoram.\*

KING LEAR  
Pass.

GLOUCESTER  
I know that voice.

KING LEAR  
Ha! Goneril, with a white beard!  
They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard\* ere the black ones were there.  
To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything that I said  
When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter;  
when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out.  
Go to, they are not men of 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 it not the King?

KING LEAR  
Ay, every inch a king.  
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?\* Adultery? Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No.  
The wren goes to it, 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 it, luxury,\* pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.  
Behold yond simpering 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 it 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's the sulphurous pit;  
burning, scalding, stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah!  
Give me an ounce of civet,\* good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination. There's money for thee.

GLOUCESTER  
O, let me kiss that hand.

KING LEAR  
Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

*In the clout* - bull's eye (archery term), *Sweet marjoram* - herb associated with treating madness, *white hairs in my beard* - (i.e. I was wise), *ague-proof* - secure against fever, *cause* - offense, *luxury* - lechery, *whose face...snow* - whose demeanor, seen between her legs, promises chaste behavior, *fitchew* - polecat (and slang for prostitute), *Centaurs* - lustful mythological creatures, half human/half beast, *girdle* - waist, *civet* - musk perfume



GLOUCESTER

O ruined piece of nature. Dost thou know me?

KING 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 the letters suns, I could not see one.

EDGAR

I would not take this from report—it is, and my heart breaks at it.

KING LEAR

Read.

GLOUCESTER

What, with the case\* of eyes?

KING 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.

KING 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 thine own back.

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind for which thou whipp'st her.

The usurer hangs the cozener.\*

Through tattered clothes small 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.

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, reason in madness.

KING LEAR

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

*case* - sockets, *beadle* - parish constable,

*the usurer hangs the cozener* - the big thief (the money-lending judge) hangs the small thief

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester. Thou must be patient.  
 We came crying hither. Thou knowest the first time that we smell the air we wawl and cry.  
 I will preach to thee. Mark.

GLOUCESTER  
 Alack, alack the day.

KING 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 it in proof,\* and when I have stolen upon these sons-in-law, then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

*(Enter a GENTLEMAN, with attendants.)*

GENTLEMAN  
 O, here he is! Lay hand upon him. Sir, your most dear daughter—

KING LEAR  
 No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even the natural fool of fortune.  
 Use me well; you shall have ransom.  
 Let me have surgeons; I am cut to the brains.

GENTLEMAN  
 You shall have any thing.

KING LEAR  
 I am a king; my masters, know you that?

GENTLEMAN  
 You are a royal one, and we obey you.

KING LEAR  
 Then there's life in it. Come, and you get it, you shall get it with running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.\*

*(Exit running; GENTLEMAN and attendants follow.)*

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?

*block* - (his head?), *in proof* - to the test, *Sa, sa, sa, sa* - hunting and rallying cry

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

Hearty thanks.

*(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 it.

*(EDGAR interposes.)*

OSWALD

Wherefore, bold peasant, darest thou support a published\* traitor?  
Hence, lest that the infection of his fortune take like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

EDGAR

Ch'ill 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.  
Nay, come not near the old man. Ch'ill be plain with you.

OSWALD

Out, dunghill!

EDGAR

Ch'ill pick your teeth, zir. Come. No matter vor your foins.\*

*(They fight, and OSWALD falls.)*

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!

*pregnant* - disposed, *biding* - place of refuge, *framed flesh* - born, *published* - proclaimed, *foins* - thrusts

*(OSWALD 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.

*(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 goal;  
from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labor.

Your (wife, so I would say) affectionate servant, 'GONERIL.'

O undistinguished space of woman's will!

A plot upon her virtuous husband's life, and the exchange my brother.

Give me your hand.

*(Drum afar off.)*

Come father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

*(Exeunt.)*

*want not* - is not lacking

## Act 4, Scene 7 A tent in the French camp. Lear on a bed asleep

(Enter CORDELIA, KENT and DOCTOR.)

CORDELIA

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

KENT

To be acknowledged madam, is overpaid.

CORDELIA

(To the DOCTOR.) How does the King?

DOCTOR

Madam, sleeps still.

CORDELIA

O you kind gods, cure this great breach in his abused\* nature.

DOCTOR

So please your majesty that we may wake the King? He hath slept long.

CORDELIA

Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed in the sway of your own will.

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

Was this a face to be opposed against the warring winds?  
To stand against the deep dread bolted thunder? In the most terrible and nimble stroke of quick, cross lightning?  
Mine enemy's dog, though he had bit me, should have stood that night against my fire.  
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once had not concluded all.  
He wakes. Speak to him.

DOCTOR

Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

*abused* - disturbed

CORDELIA

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

KING LEAR

You do me wrong to take me out of the grave.

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears do scald like molten lead.

CORDELIA

Sir, do you know me?

KING LEAR

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

CORDELIA

Still, still, far wide.

DOCTOR

He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.

KING LEAR

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight? I know not what to say.

I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see—I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured of my condition.

CORDELIA

O, look upon me, sir, and hold your hands in benediction over me.

No, sir, you must not kneel.

KING LEAR

Pray, do not mock me.

I am a very foolish fond old man, fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;

and, to deal plainly, I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks I should know you, and know this man; yet I am doubtful for I am mainly ignorant what place this is;

and all the skill I have remembers not these garments; nor I know not where I did lodge last night.

Do not laugh at me; for, as I am a man, I think this lady to be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA

And so I am! I am!

KING LEAR

Be your tears wet? 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.

KING LEAR

Am I in France?

KENT

In your own kingdom, sir.

KING LEAR

Do not abuse me.

DOCTOR

Be comforted, good madam. The great rage, you see is killed in him.

Desire him to go in. Trouble him no more till further settling.

CORDELIA

Will it please your highness walk?

KING LEAR

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

*(Exeunt.)*

**Act 5, Scene 1    The British camp, near Dover**

*(Enter, with drum and colors, EDMUND, REGAN, gentlemen and soldiers.)*

EDMUND

Know of the Duke if his last purpose\* hold, or whether he has changd the course.  
He's full of alteration and self reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.\*

*(Exit an 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, do you not love my sister?

EDMUND

In honored love.

REGAN

But have you never found my brother's way to the forfended\* place?

EDMUND

That thought abuses you.

REGAN

I never shall endure her. Dear my lord, be not familiar with her.

EDMUND

Fear me not.

She and the Duke her husband!

*(Enter, with drum and colors, ALBANY, GONERIL and soldiers.)*

GONERIL

*(Aside.)* I had rather lose the battle than that sister should loosen him and me.

ALBANY

Our very loving sister, well be-met.

Sir, this I hear: the King is come to his daughter, with others whom the rigor of our state forced to cry out.

This business however touches us as France invades our land, not bolds\* the King.

*last purpose* - i.e. to fight, *constant pleasure* - firm decision,  
*doubted* - feared, *forfended* - forbidden, *bolds* - supports



EDMUND

Sir, you speak nobly.

GONERIL

Combine together against the enemy; for these domestic and particular broils are not the question here.

ALBANY

Let's then determine with the ancient of war\* on our proceedings.

EDMUND

I shall attend you presently at your tent.

REGAN

Sister, you'll go with us?

GONERIL

No.

REGAN

'Tis most convenient. Pray you, go with us.

GONERIL

*(Aside.)* O ho, I know the riddle. I will go.

*(As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised.)*

EDGAR

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

ALBANY

I'll overtake you. Speak.

*(Exeunt all but ALBANY and EDGAR.)*

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.

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.

*ancient of war* - most experienced commander, *avouched* - maintained

ALBANY

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

*(Exit EDGAR.)*

*(Re enter EDMUND.)*

EDMUND

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

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 ALBANY.)*

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 EDMUND.)*

*jealous*-suspicious, *countenance* - authority

**Act 5, Scene 2 A field between the two camps**

*(Enter EDGAR and GLOUCESTER.)*

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

Grace go with you, sir.

*(Exit EDGAR.)*

*(Alarum and retreat within. Re enter EDGAR.)*

EDGAR

Away, old man! Give me thy hand. Away!  
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter taken. Give me thy hand. Come on.

GLOUCESTER

No farther, sir. A man may rot even here.

EDGAR

What, in ill thoughts again?  
Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither. Ripeness is all.\* Come on.

GLOUCESTER

And that's true too.

*(Exeunt.)*

*Ripeness is all* - perhaps Shakespeare's philosophy of life

### Act 5, Scene 3    The British camp near Dover

*(Enter, in conquest, with drum and colors, EDMUND; KING LEAR and CORDELIA as prisoners; CAPTAIN and soldiers.)*

EDMUND  
Some officers take them away.

CORDELIA  
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

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

EDMUND  
Take them away.

KING LEAR  
Upon such sacrifices,\* my Cordelia, the gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee? Wipe thine eyes.  
The good years shall devour them,\* flesh and fell, ere they shall make us weep! We'll see 'em starve first.  
Come.

*(Exeunt KING LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded.)*

EDMUND  
Come hither, captain. Take thou this note. 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 it, or thrive by other means.

CAPTAIN  
I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats. If it be man's work, I'll do it.

EDMUND  
About it; and write happy when thou hast done.

*(Exit CAPTAIN.)*

*(Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, another CAPTAIN and soldiers.)*

*gilded butterflies* - beautifully dressed courtiers fluttering about nothing,  
*sacrifices* - renunciation of the world, *them* - enemies of Lear and Cordelia

ALBANY

Sir, you have shown today your valiant strain, and fortune led you well.

You have the captives that 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 has charm, 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, to appear where you shall hold your session.

ALBANY

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

REGAN

That's as we list 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.

GONERIL

That were the most if he should husband you.

REGAN

Jesters do oft prove prophets.

GONERIL

Holla, holla! That eye that told you so looked but a squint.

REGAN

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

Witness the world, that I create Edmund here my lord and master.

GONERIL

Mean you to enjoy him?

ALBANY

The let alone\* lies not in your good will.

*impressed* - conscripted, *subject of* - subordinate in, *list to grace* - please to honor,

*compeers* - equals, *stomach* - anger, *let-alone* - power to prevent

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.  
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 banes.\*  
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 head thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons, there is my pledge.

(*Throwing down a glove.*)

I'll prove 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 never trust medicine.

EDMUND  
There's my exchange.

(*Throwing down a glove.*)

What in the world he is that names me traitor, villain like he lies.  
Call by thy trumpet. He that dares approach, on him, on you, who not?  
I will maintain my truth and honor firmly.

ALBANY  
A herald, ho!

EDMUND  
A herald, ho, a herald!

*Half-blooded* - by birth only half noble,  
*contradict your banes* - forbid your announced intention to marry (by citing the pre-contract)

ALBANY

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, attended.)*

*(Enter a HERALD.)*

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

CAPTAIN

Sound, trumpet!

*(A trumpet sounds.)*

HERALD

*(Reads.)* 'If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in his defence.'

EDMUND

Sound!

*(First trumpet.)*

HERALD

Again!

*(Second trumpet.)*

HERALD

Again!

*(Third trumpet.)*

*(Trumpet answers.)*

*(Enter EDGAR, at the third sound, armed.)*

ALBANY

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

HERALD

What are you? Your name, your quality, and why you answer this present summons?

EDGAR

Know my name is lost, by treason's tooth bare-gnawn 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 sayest thou to him?

EDGAR

Thou art a traitor; false to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father; conspirant against this high-illustrious prince;  
and from the 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 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!  
Trumpets, speak!

*(Alarums. They fight. EDMUND falls.)*

ALBANY

Save him, save him!

GONERIL

This is practice,\* Gloucester. By the law of arms 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.  
Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil. No tearing, lady! I perceive you know it.

*(Gives the letter to EDMUND.)*

GONERIL

Say if I do—the laws are mine, not thine.

ALBANY

Most monstrous! Knowest thou this paper?

*canker-bit* - eaten by a caterpillar,

*rule of knighthood* - knights were only honor bound to fight known adversaries,

*practice* - trickery, *cozened* - cheated



GONERIL

Ask me not what I know.

*(Exit GONERIL.)*

ALBANY

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

*(Exit 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 art noble, I do forgive thee.

EDGAR

I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund. 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

Thou hast spoken right; 'tis true. The wheel\* is come full circle; I am here.

ALBANY

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

EDGAR

By nursing them, my lord.

The bloody proclamation to escape, taught me to shift into a madman's rags;

and in this habit\* met I my father with his bleeding rings;

became his guide, led him, begged for him, saved him from despair; never, O fault, revealed myself unto him, until some half hour past, hoping of this good success, I asked his blessing.

But his flawed heart, too weak the conflict to support 'twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, burst smilingly.

*(Enter a GENTLEMAN, with a bloody knife.)*

GENTLEMAN

Help, help! O, help!

EDGAR

What kind of help?

ALBANY

Speak, man.

*pleasant* - pleasurable, *place* - bed of adultery, *wheel* - (of fortune), *habit* - attire

EDGAR

What means that bloody knife?

GENTLEMAN

'Tis hot, it smokes. It came even from the heart of—O, she's dead!

ALBANY

Who dead? Speak, man.

GENTLEMAN

Your lady, sir, your lady; and her sister by her is poisoned; she hath confessed it.

EDMUND

I was contracted to them both. All three now marry\* in an instant.

EDGAR

Here comes the banished Kent, who in disguise served his enemy King.

ALBANY

Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead.

*(Exit GENTLEMAN.)*

*(Enter KENT.)*

O, is this Kent?

KENT

I am come to bid my King and master good night. Is he not here?

ALBANY

Great thing of us forgot!

Speak, Edmund, where's the King and where's Cordelia?

See'st thou this object, Kent?

*(The bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in.)*

KENT

Alack, why thus?

EDMUND

The one the other poisoned for my sake, and after slew herself.

I pant for life. Some good I mean to do, despite of mine own nature.

Quickly send, be brief in it, to the castle, for my writ is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.

Nay, send in time.

*marry* - i.e. in death

ALBANY  
Run, run, O run!

EDGAR  
To who, my lord? Who hath the office? Send thy token of reprieve.

EDMUND  
Well thought on. Take my sword; give it the captain.

ALBANY  
Haste thee, for thy life.

*(Exit EDGAR.)*

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.)*

*(Re enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR, CAPTAIN and others following.)*

KING LEAR  
Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones.  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'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?

KING LEAR  
This feather stirs; she lives!  
If it be so, it is a chance which does redeem all sorrows that ever I have felt.

KENT  
*(Kneeling.)* O my good master!

KING LEAR  
Prithee, away.

EDGAR  
'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

KING LEAR

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

CAPTAIN

'Tis true, my lords, he did.

KING LEAR

Did I not, fellow? I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion\* I would have made them skip.  
I am old now, and these same crosses spoil me.\*  
Who are you? Mine eyes are not of the best.

KENT

If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated, one of them we behold.

KING LEAR

This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT

The same; your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?\*

KING 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.

KING LEAR

I'll see that straight.\*

ALBANY

He knows not what he says; and vain it is that we present us to him.

*(Enter a CAPTAIN.)*

CAPTAIN

Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALBANY

That's but a trifle here.

KING LEAR

And my poor fool is hanged!

*falchion* - small, slightly hooked sword

*crosses spoil me* - adversities sap my strength,

*Caius* - Kent's name when in disguise, *see that straight* - understand that in a moment

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.  
Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips, look there, look there—

*(LEAR 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.

ALBANY  
*(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.

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.

*(The end.)*

*rack* - machine of torture, *obey* - submit to