

ACT I

SCENE I. 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, sir, a son by order of law, some year **younger** 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 honourable friend.

EDMUND

My services to your lordship.

KENT

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

EDMUND

Sir, I shall study deserving.

GLOUCESTER

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

Drums. Enter KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and Attendants

Exeunt GLOUCESTER and EDMUND

KING LEAR

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
Unburthen'd 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. 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, honour;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

LEAR

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's issue

Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

REGAN

Sir, I am made
Of the self-same metal 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.

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 conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy,
Although the last, not least; what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

CORDELIA

Nothing, my lord.

KING LEAR

Nothing!

CORDELIA

Nothing.

KING LEAR

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA

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

KING LEAR

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

CORDELIA

Good my lord,
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.

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:
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, forever, my sometime daughter.

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!
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
I do invest you jointly with my power,
Pre-eminence, and all the large effects
That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,
With reservation of an hundred knights,
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain
The name, and all the additions to a king;
The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,
Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm,
This part betwixt you.

Giving the document.

KENT

Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,
Loved as my father, as my master follow'd,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers,--

KING LEAR

The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft.

KENT

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad. What wilt thou do, old man?
Reverse thy doom; cheque
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs 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 the motive.

KING LEAR

Out of my sight!

KENT

See better, Lear; and let me still remain
The true blank of thine eye.

KING LEAR

Now, by Apollo,--

ALBANY/CORDELIA

Dear sir, forbear.

KENT

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

KING LEAR

Hear me, recreant!
On thine allegiance, hear me!
Since thou hast sought to come between our
Sentence and our power, take thy reward.
Five days we do allot thee, for provision
To shield thee from diseases of the world;
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following,
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away! by Jupiter,
This shall not be revoked.

KENT

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

To CORDELIA

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

To 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

Flourish. 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, who with this king
Hath rivall'd for our daughter: what, in the least,
Will you require in present dower with her,
Or cease your quest of love?

BURGUNDY

Most royal majesty,
I crave no more than what your highness offer'd,
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 fall'n. Sir, there she stands:
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,
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.

KING OF FRANCE

This is most strange,
That she, that even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence
Must be of such unnatural degree,
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection
Fall'n into taint: which to believe of her,
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Could never plant in me.

CORDELIA

I yet beseech your majesty,--
If for I want that glib and oily art,
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,
I'll do't before I speak,--that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
But even for want of that for which I am richer,
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
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? Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

BURGUNDY

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

KING LEAR

Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.

BURGUNDY

I am sorry, then, 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!
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,

Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:
Thou lovest 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.

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

KING OF FRANCE

Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA

I know you what you are;
Use well our father:
To your professed bosoms I commit him
But I would prefer him to a better place.

REGAN

Prescribe not us our duties.

GONERIL

Let your study
Be to content your lord. You have obedience scanted,
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

CORDELIA

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides:
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.
Well may you prosper!

KING OF FRANCE

Come, my fair Cordelia.

Exeunt KING OF FRANCE and CORDELIA

GONERIL

Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what most nearly appertains 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. 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

Then must we look to receive from his age, the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

REGAN

Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment. We shall further think on't.

GONERIL

We must do something, and i' the heat.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The Earl of Gloucester's castle.

Enter EDMUND, with a letter

EDMUND

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen 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 banish'd thus! and France in choler parted! And the king gone to-night! 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? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

Give me the letter, sir.

EDMUND

I shall offend, either to detain or give it. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

GLOUCESTER

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

him, you should 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? --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

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 heretofore sounded you in this business?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

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

EDMUND

I do not well know, my lord. I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath wrote this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no further pretence of danger.

GLOUCESTER

Think you so?

EDMUND

If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

GLOUCESTER

He cannot be such a monster—

EDMUND

Nor is not, sure.

GLOUCESTER

To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out: wind me into him, I pray you.

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: 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; do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! His offence, honesty! 'Tis strange.

Exit

EDMUND

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,--often the surfeit of our own behavior,--we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and 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. 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. Tut, 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 like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam.

EDGAR

How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in?

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

Do you busy yourself about that?

EDMUND

I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what. Come, come; when saw you my father last?

EDGAR

Why, the night gone by.

EDMUND

Spake you with him?

EDGAR

Ay, two hours together.

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

None at all.

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

Armed, brother!

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

Shall I hear from you anon?

EDMUND

I do serve you in this business.

Exit EDGAR

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

Exit

SCENE III. The Duke of Albany's palace.

Enter GONERIL, and OSWALD, her steward

GONERIL

Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?

OSWALD

Yes, madam.

GONERIL

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

OSWALD

He's coming, madam; I hear him.

Horns within

GONERIL

Put on what weary negligence you please;
If he dislike it, let him to our sister. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again.
Remember what I tell you.

OSWALD

Well, madam.

GONERIL

I'll write straight to my sister,
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. A hall in the same.

Enter KENT, disguised

KENT

Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lovest,
Shall find thee full of labours.

Drums within. Enter KING LEAR, Knights, and Attendants

KING LEAR

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

Exit an Attendant

How now! what art thou?

KENT

A man, sir.

KING LEAR

What dost thou profess? what wouldst thou with us?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

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.

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,--

KING LEAR

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

OSWALD

My lady's father.

KING LEAR

'My lady's father'! my lord's knave: your whoreson dog! 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?

Striking him

OSWALD

I'll not be struck, my lord.

KENT

Nor tripped neither, you base football player.

Tripping up his heels

KING LEAR

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

KENT

Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences: away, away! if you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry: but away! go to; have you wisdom? So.

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.

Offering 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 favour: there, take my coxcomb: why, this fellow has banished two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will; if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

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.

Fool

Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

KING LEAR

Do.

Fool

Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest,
Ride more than thou goest,
Learn more than thou trowest,
Set less than thou throwest;

Leave thy drink and thy whore,
And keep in-a-door,
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens to a score.

KENT

This is nothing, fool.

Fool

Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

KING LEAR

Why, no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing.

Fool

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

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

No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't: and ladies too, they will not let me have all fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

KING LEAR

What two crowns shall they be?

Fool

Why, after I have cut the egg i' the middle, and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou borest thy ass on thy back o'er the dirt: 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.

Singing

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.

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,

Singing

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 o' thing than a fool: and yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides, and left nothing i' the middle: here comes one o' the parings.

Enter GONERIL

KING LEAR

How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on?
Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown.

Fool

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.

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?

GONERIL

Come, sir,
I would you would make use of that good wisdom,
Whereof I know you are fraught; and put away
These dispositions, that 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

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

Fool

Lear's shadow.

KING LEAR

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

Fool

Which they will make an obedient father.

KING LEAR

Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GONERIL

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 disorder'd, so debosh'd 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,
And 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 disorder'd rabble
Make servants of their betters.

Enter ALBANY

KING LEAR

Woe, that too late repents,--

To ALBANY

O, sir, are you come?

Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea-monster!

ALBANY

Pray, sir, be patient.

KING LEAR

[To GONERIL] Detested kite! thou liest.
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,

Striking his head

ALBANY

KING LEAR

Exit

ALBANY

GONERIL

Re-enter KING LEAR

KING LEAR

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

ALBANY

What's the matter, sir?

KING LEAR

I'll tell thee:

To GONERIL

Life and death! I am ashamed
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!
Yea, it is come to this?
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 wolfish 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.

Exeunt KING LEAR, KENT, and Attendants

GONERIL

Do you mark that, my lord?

ALBANY

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

GONERIL

Pray you, content.

What, Oswald, ho!

To the Fool

You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master.

Fool

Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry and take the fool with thee.

Exit

GONERIL

This man hath had good counsel:--a hundred knights!
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
At point a hundred knights,
And 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 utter'd I have writ my sister
If she sustain him and his hundred knights
When I have show'd the unfitness,--

Re-enter OSWALD

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

OSWALD

Yes, madam.

GONERIL

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 attack'd for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness.

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

SCENE V. Court before the same.

Enter KING LEAR, KENT, and Fool

KING LEAR

Go you before to Gloucester 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

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

Why, 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 i'
the middle on's face?

KING LEAR

No.

Fool

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

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?

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

To take 't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

Fool

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

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!
Come, boy.

Fool

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

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. GLOUCESTER's castle.

Enter EDMUND

EDMUND

The duke be here to-night? The better! best!
This weaves itself perforce into my business.
Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

Enter EDGAR

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

EDGAR

I am sure on't, not a word.

EDMUND

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

Exit EDGAR

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion.

Wounds his arm

Of my more fierce endeavour: I have seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport. Father, father!
Stop, stop! No help?

Enter GLOUCESTER, and Servants with torches

GLOUCESTER

Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

But where is he?

EDMUND

Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

Pursue him, ho! Go after.

Exeunt some Servants

By no means what?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

Let him fly far:

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
And found--dispatch. I will proclaim it,
That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
Bringing the murderous coward to the stake;
He that conceals him, death.

EDMUND

When I dissuaded him from his intent, with curst speech
I threaten'd to discover him: he replied,
'Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou think,
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Make thy words faith'd?

GLOUCESTER

Strong and fasten'd villain
Would he deny his letter? I never got him.

Tucket within

Hark, the duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
To make thee capable.

Exeunt

SCENE II. 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

I' the mire.

OSWALD

Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

KENT

I love thee not.

OSWALD

Why, then, I care not for thee.

KENT

Fellow, I know thee.

OSWALD

What dost thou know me for?

KENT

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

OSWALD

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

KENT

What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels, and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue: for, though it be night, yet the moon shines; I'll make a sop o' the moonshine of you: draw, you whoreson cullionly barber-monger, draw.

Drawing his sword

OSWALD

Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

KENT

Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the king; draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways.

OSWALD

Help, ho! murder! help!

KENT

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

Beating him

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

I am scarce in breath, my lord.

KENT

You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee: a tailor made thee.

CORNWALL

Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man?

KENT

Ay, a tailor, sir: a stone-cutter or painter could not have made him so ill.

CORNWALL

Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

OSWALD

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

KENT

Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a jakes 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.
A plague upon your epileptic visage!
Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?

CORNWALL

Why, art thou mad, old fellow?

GLOUCESTER

How fell you out? say that.

CORNWALL

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

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

KENT

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

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

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

KENT

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

REGAN

Sir, being his knave, I will.

CORNWALL

This is a fellow of the self-same colour
Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks!

Stocks brought out

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

I'll answer that.

REGAN

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

KENT is put in the stocks

Come, my good lord, away.

Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER and KENT

GLOUCESTER

I am sorry for thee, friend; 'tis the duke's pleasure,
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,
Will not be rubb'd nor stopp'd: I'll entreat for thee.

KENT

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

A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:
Give you good morrow!

GLOUCESTER

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

Exit

KENT

Fortune, good night: smile once more: turn thy wheel!

Sleeps

SCENE III. A wood.

Enter EDGAR

EDGAR

I heard myself proclaim'd;
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 hair 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, Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

Exit

SCENE IV. Before GLOUCESTER's castle. KENT in the stocks.

Enter KING LEAR and Fool

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. Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs: when a man's over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.

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

They durst not do 't;
They could not, would not do 't; 'tis worse than murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage:
Resolve me, with all modest haste, which way

Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,
Coming from us.

Fool

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

KING LEAR

Where is this daughter?

KENT

With the earl, sir, here within.

KING LEAR

Follow me not;
Stay here.

Exit

KENT

How chance the king comes with so small a train?

Fool

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

KENT

Why, fool?

Fool

We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no labouring i' the winter. All that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men; and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking. 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.

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

KENT

Where learned you this, fool?

Fool

Not i' the stocks, fool.

Re-enter KING LEAR with GLOUCESTER

KING LEAR

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?
They have travell'd all the night? Mere fetches;
Fetch me a better answer.

GLOUCESTER

My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the duke;
How unremoveable and fix'd 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 inform'd them so.

KING LEAR

Inform'd 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 inform'd 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:
Infirmary doth still neglect all office
Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves
When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
To suffer with the body: I'll forbear;
Death on my state! wherefore

Looking on KENT

Should he sit here? This act persuades me
That this remotion of the duke and her
Is practise only. Give me my servant forth.
Go tell the duke and 's wife I'd speak with them,
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,

Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry sleep to death.

GLOUCESTER

I would have all well betwixt you.

Exit

KING LEAR

O me, my heart, my rising heart! but, down!

Fool

Cry to it, nuncle.

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; I know what reason
I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulchring an adultress.

To KENT

O, are you free?
Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,
Thy sister's naught: O Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here:

Points to his heart

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

REGAN

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

KING LEAR

Say, how is that?

REGAN

I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance
She have restrain'd 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.
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine: you should be ruled and led
By some discretion, that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,
That to our sister you do make return;
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

KING LEAR

Ask her forgiveness?
'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;

Kneeling

Age is unnecessary: on my knees I beg
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.'

REGAN

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

KING LEAR

[Rising] Never, Regan:
She hath abated me of half my train;
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness!

CORNWALL

Fie, sir, fie!

KING LEAR

You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,
To fall and blast her pride!

REGAN

O the blest gods!

So will you wish on me, when the rash mood is on.

KING LEAR

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce; but thine
Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
To grudge my pleasures;
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endow'd.

REGAN

Good sir, to the purpose.

KING LEAR

Who put my man i' the stocks?

Tucket within

CORNWALL

What trumpet's that?

REGAN

I know't, my sister's: this approves her letter,
That she would soon be here.

Enter OSWALD

Is your lady come?

KING LEAR

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

CORNWALL

What means your grace?

KING LEAR

Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope
Thou didst not know on't. Who comes here? O heavens,

Enter GONERIL

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

To GONERIL

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

GONERIL

Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended?
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 i' 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, being weak, seem so.
If, till the expiration of your month,
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me:
I am now from home, and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

KING LEAR

Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' the air;

To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,--
Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?
Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and packhorse
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. But I'll not chide thee;
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.

REGAN

Not altogether so:
I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister.

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?
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 follow'd
With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five and twenty, Regan? said you so?

REGAN

And speak't again, my lord; no more with me.

KING LEAR

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

To GONERIL

I'll go with thee:
Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

GONERIL

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

REGAN

What need one?

KING LEAR

O, reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,--

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
Let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall--I will do such things,--
What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep
No, I'll not weep: [*Storm and tempest*]
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

CORNWALL

Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

REGAN

This house is little: the old man and his people
Cannot be well bestow'd.

GONERIL

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

REGAN

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

GONERIL

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

CORNWALL

Follow'd the old man forth: he is return'd.

Re-enter GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER

The king is in high rage.

CORNWALL

Whither is he going?

GLOUCESTER

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 a bout
There's scarce a bush.

REGAN

Shut up your doors:

He is attended with a desperate train;
And what they may incense him to, being apt
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.

CORNWALL

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

Exeunt

ACT III

SCENE II. 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 drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!

Fool

O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door.
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, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man:
No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
I will say nothing.

Enter KENT

KENT

Who's there?

Fool

Marry, here's a wise man and a fool.

KENT

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

KING LEAR

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning.

KENT

Alack, bare-headed!
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:
Repose you there.

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.

Fool

[Singing]
He that has and a little tiny wit--

With hey, 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

SCENE III. Gloucester's castle.

Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND

GLOUCESTER

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

EDMUND

Most savage and unnatural!

GLOUCESTER

Go to; say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the dukes; and a worse matter than that: I have received a letter this night; 'tis dangerous to be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there's part of a power already footed: we must incline to the king. I will seek him, and privily 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. Though I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund; pray you, be careful.

Exit

EDMUND

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

Exit

SCENE IV. The heath. Before a hovel.

Enter KING LEAR, KENT, and Fool

KENT

Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter:
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure.

Storm still

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: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt.
The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home:
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure.
In such a night as this! O Regan, 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. You houseless poverty,--
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

Fool goes in

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

EDGAR

[Within] Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom!

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 i' 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

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

EDGAR

Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through
flame, and through ford and whirlpool e'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under

his pillow, and halts in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge; made film proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold,--O, do de, do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes: there could I have him now,--and there,--and there again, and there.

Storm still

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.

KENT

He hath no daughters, sir.

KING LEAR

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

EDGAR

Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:
Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

Fool

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

EDGAR

Take heed o' the foul fiend: Tom's a-cold.

KING LEAR

What hast thou been?

EDGAR

A serving-man, 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; and in woman out-paramoured the Turk: false of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep thy foot out of brothels, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind: Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny. Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by.

Storm still

KING LEAR

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 on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come unbutton here.

Tearing off his clothes

Fool

Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart; a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.

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; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

KENT

How fares your grace?

KING LEAR

What's he?

KENT

Who's there? What is't you seek?

GLOUCESTER

What are you there? Your names?

EDGAR

Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog;

But mice and rats, and such small deer,

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin; peace, thou fiend!

GLOUCESTER

What, hath your grace no better company?

EDGAR

The prince of darkness is a gentleman.

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

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

KING LEAR

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

KENT

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

KING LEAR

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

EDGAR

How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

KING LEAR

Let me ask you one word in private.

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

Canst thou blame him?

Storm still

His daughters seek his death:
Thou say'st the king grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself: I had a son;
He sought my life;
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend;

No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!
I do beseech your grace,--

KING LEAR

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

EDGAR

Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

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

KING LEAR

Come let's in all.

KENT

This way, my lord.

KING LEAR

With him;
I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

Take him you on.

KENT

Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

KING LEAR

Come, good Athenian.

GLOUCESTER

No words, no words: hush.

EDGAR

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

Exeunt

SCENE V. Gloucester's castle.

Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND

CORNWALL

I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

EDMUND

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

CORNWALL

I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death.

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

Exeunt

SCENE VI. 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

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

Exit GLOUCESTER

Fool

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

KING LEAR

A king, a king!

Fool

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

KING LEAR

To have a thousand with red burning spits
Come hissing in upon 'em,--

EDGAR

The foul fiend bites my back.

Fool

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

KING LEAR

To EDGAR

Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer;

To the Fool

Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she foxes!

EDGAR

Look, where he stands and glares!
Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?
Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me,--

Fool

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

EDGAR

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

KENT

How do you, sir?
Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

KING LEAR

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

To EDGAR

Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;

To the Fool

And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity,
Bench by his side:

To KENT

You are o' the commission; Sit you too.

EDGAR

Let us deal justly.
Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;
Pur! the cat is gray.

KING LEAR

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

Fool

Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

KING LEAR

She cannot deny it.

Fool

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

KING LEAR

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'll mar my counterfeiting.

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 i' he
morning. So, so, so.

Fool

And I'll go to bed at noon.

Re-enter GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER

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

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms;
I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him:
There is a litter ready; lay him in 't,
And drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master:
And follow me, that will to some provision
Give thee quick conduct.

KENT

To the Fool

Come, help to bear thy master;
Thou must not stay behind.

GLOUCESTER

Come, come, away.

Exeunt all but EDGAR

EDGAR

When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers, suffers most i' the mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind:
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'er skip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
How light and portable my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the king bow,
What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the king!
Lurk, lurk.

Exit

SCENE VII. Gloucester's castle.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servants

CORNWALL

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

Exeunt some of the Servants

REGAN

Hang him instantly.

GONERIL

Pluck out his eyes.

CORNWALL

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

Enter OSWALD

How now! where's the king?

OSWALD

My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence:
Who, with some other of the lords dependants,
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

Who's there? the traitor?

Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three

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.

REGAN plucks his beard

REGAN

So white, and such a traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Naughty lady,
I am your host:
With robbers' hands my hospitable favours
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

Cunning.

REGAN

And false.

CORNWALL

Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOUCESTER

To Dover.

REGAN

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

CORNWALL

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover, sir?

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.

CORNWALL

See't shalt thou never.

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. What do you mean?

CORNWALL

My villain!

They draw and fight

First Servant

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

Servant Dies

CORNWALL

Lest he see more, prevent it.

REGAN

Out, vile jelly!
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.

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

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

Exit one with GLOUCESTER

How is't, my lord? How look you?

CORNWALL

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

Exit CORNWALL, led by REGAN

ACT IV**SCENE I. The heath.**

Enter EDGAR

EDGAR

To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear:
The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!

Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man

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

Old Man

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

GLOUCESTER

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

Old Man

Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

GLOUCESTER

I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;
I stumbled when I saw: O dear son Edgar,
The food of thy abused father's wrath!
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again!

Old Man

How now! Who's there?

EDGAR

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

Old Man

'Tis poor mad Tom.

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

Is it a beggar-man?

Old Man

Madman and beggar too.

GLOUCESTER

He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' 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.
Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man

Ay, my lord.

GLOUCESTER

Then, prithee, get thee gone:
And 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.

Old Man

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

Exit

GLOUCESTER

Sirrah, naked fellow,--

EDGAR

Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

Come hither, fellow.

EDGAR

Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Know'st 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, good man's son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; so, bless thee, master!

GLOUCESTER

Dost thou know Dover?

EDGAR

Ay, master.

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

Give me thy arm: Poor Tom shall lead thee.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Before ALBANY's palace.

Enter GONERIL and EDMUND

GONERIL

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

Enter OSWALD

Now, where's your master'?

OSWALD

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

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

GONERIL

[To EDMUND] Then shall you go no further.
It is the cowish terror of his spirit,
That dares not undertake: he'll not feel wrongs
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way
May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers:
I must change arms at home, and give the distaff
Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear,
If you dare venture in your own behalf,
A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

Giving a favour

Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:
Conceive, and fare thee well.

EDMUND

Yours in the ranks of death.

GONERIL

My most dear Gloucester!

Exit EDMUND

O, the difference of man and man!
To thee a woman's services are due:
My fool usurps my body.

OSWALD

Madam, here comes my lord.

Exit

Enter ALBANY

GONERIL

I have been worth the whistling.

ALBANY

O Goneril!

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

GONERIL

No more; the text is foolish.

ALBANY

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:
Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?
Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,
It will come:
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.

GONERIL

Milk-liver'd man!

That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land;
With plumed helm thy slayer begins threats;
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sit'st still, and criest
'Alack, why does he so?'

ALBANY

See thyself, devil!

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman.

GONERIL

O vain fool!

ALBANY

Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,
Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness

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

GONERIL

Marry, your manhood now--

Enter a Messenger

ALBANY

What news?

Messenger

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

ALBANY

Gloucester's eyes!

Messenger

Both, both, my lord.
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;
'Tis from your sister.

GONERIL

[Aside] One way I like this well;
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her--
I'll read, and answer.

Exit

ALBANY

Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

Messenger

Come with my lady hither.

ALBANY

He is not here.

Messenger

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

ALBANY

Knows he the wickedness?

Messenger

Ay, my good lord; 'twas he inform'd 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 show'dst the king,
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:
Tell me what more thou know'st.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. The same. A tent.

Enter, with drum and colours, CORDELIA, Doctor, and Soldiers

CORDELIA

Alack, 'tis he: why, he was met even now
As mad as the vex'd sea.
A century send forth;
Search every acre in the high-grown field,
And bring him to our eye.

Exit an Officer

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

Doctor

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

CORDELIA

All blest secrets,
All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him;

Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

News, madam;
The British powers are marching hitherward.

CORDELIA

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

Exeunt

SCENE V. Gloucester's castle.

Enter REGAN and OSWALD

REGAN

But are my brother's powers set forth?

OSWALD

Ay, madam.

REGAN

Himself in person there?

OSWALD

Madam, with much ado: your sister is the better soldier.

REGAN

Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

OSWALD

No, madam.

REGAN

What might import my sister's letter to him?

OSWALD

I know not, lady.

REGAN

'Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.
It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,
To let him live: where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted life: moreover, to descry
The strength o' the enemy.

OSWALD

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

REGAN

Our troops set forth to-morrow: stay with us;
The ways are dangerous.

OSWALD

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

REGAN

Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you
Transport her purposes by word? Belike,
Something--I know not what: I'll love thee much,
Let me unseal the letter.

OSWALD

Madam, I had rather--

REGAN

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

OSWALD

I, madam?

REGAN

I speak in understanding; you are; I know't:
Therefore I do advise you, take this note:
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd;
And more convenient is he for my hand

Than for your lady's: you may gather more.
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.
So, fare you well.
If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

OSWALD

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

REGAN

Fare thee well.

Exeunt

SCENE VI. 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 labour.

GLOUCESTER

Methinks the ground is even.

EDGAR

Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

GLOUCESTER

No, truly.

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

So may it be, indeed:
Methinks thy voice is alter'd; 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 fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge,
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

GLOUCESTER

Set me where you stand.

EDGAR

Give me your hand: you are now within a foot
Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon
Would I not leap upright.

GLOUCESTER

Let go my hand.

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

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

GLOUCESTER

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

He falls forward

EDGAR

Alive or dead?

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

Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.

What are you, sir?

GLOUCESTER

Away, and let me die.

EDGAR

Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,

So many fathom down precipitating,

Thou'dst shiver'd 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 fall'n, or no?

EDGAR

From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.

Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far

Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

GLOUCESTER

Alack, I have no eyes.

Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,

To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,

When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,

And frustrate his proud will.

EDGAR

Give me your arm:

Up: so. How is 't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

GLOUCESTER

Too well, too well.

EDGAR

This is above all strangeness.

Upon the crown o' 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 whelk'd and waved like the enridged sea:
It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

Enter KING LEAR, fantastically dressed with wild flowers

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.

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 't. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant. Bring up the brown
bills. O, well flown, bird! i' the clout, i' 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 every thing that I said!-- Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was every thing; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.

GLOUCESTER

The trick of that voice I do well remember:
Is 't 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 't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight. Let copulation thrive,
For Gloucester's bastard son was kinder to his father
Than were my daughters got 'tween the lawful sheets.
Down from the waist they are Centaurs, though women all above: but to the girdle do the
gods inherit, beneath is all the fiends'; 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.

GLOUCESTER

O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world
Shall so wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

KING LEAR

I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squint at me?

GLOUCESTER

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

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.

EDGAR

O, matter and impertinency mix'd!
Reason in madness!

KING LEAR

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester:
Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.

GLOUCESTER

Alack, alack the day!

KING LEAR

When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools!

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

Gentleman

You are a royal one, and we obey you.

KING LEAR

Then there's life in't. Nay, if you get it, you
shall get it with running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

Exit running; Attendants follow

Gentleman

A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king!

EDGAR

Hail, gentle sir.

Gentleman

Sir, speed you: what's your will?

EDGAR

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

Gentleman

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

EDGAR

How near's the other army?

Gentleman

Near and on speedy foot; the main descry
Stands on the hourly thought.

EDGAR

I thank you, sir:

That's all.

Gentleman

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

EDGAR

I thank you, sir.

Exit Gentleman

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

Well pray you, father.

GLOUCESTER

Now, good sir, what are you?

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

Hearty thanks:

The bounty and the benison of heaven
To boot, and boot!

Enter OSWALD

OSWALD

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

GLOUCESTER

Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to't.

EDGAR interposes

OSWALD

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

Let go, slave, or thou diest!
Out, dunghill!

They fight, and EDGAR knocks him down

Oswald Dies

GLOUCESTER
What, is he dead?

EDGAR
Sit you down, father; rest you
Let's see these pockets: these letters
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 labour. 'Your--wife, so I would say-- 'Affectionate servant, 'GONERIL.'
O undistinguish'd space of woman's will!
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;
And the exchange my brother!

Edgar exits dragging body.

GLOUCESTER
The king is mad: how stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:
So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
And woes by wrong imaginations lose
The knowledge of themselves.

Enter Edgar.

EDGAR
Give me your hand:

Drum afar off

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

Exeunt

SCENE VII. A tent in the French camp. LEAR on a bed asleep,

soft music playing

Enter CORDELIA, KENT, and Doctor

CORDELIA

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

KENT

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.
All my reports go with the modest truth;
Nor more nor clipp'd, but so.

CORDELIA

Then be't so, my good lord.

To the Doctor

How does the king?

Doctor

Madam, sleeps still.

CORDELIA

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

Doctor

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

CORDELIA

Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

Enter LEAR in a chair carried by servants.

Doctor

Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep
We put fresh garments on him.
Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;
I doubt not of his temperance.

CORDELIA

Very well.

Doctor

Please you, draw near. Louder the music there!

CORDELIA

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

KENT

Kind and dear princess!

CORDELIA

Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face
To be opposed against the warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?
Alack, alack!
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him.

Doctor

Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

CORDELIA

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

KING LEAR

You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like moulten 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 am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity,
To see another thus. I know not what to say.

CORDELIA

O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er 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 kill'd in him.
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
Till further settling.

CORDELIA

Will't please your highness walk?

KING LEAR

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

Exeunt all.

ACT V

SCENE I. The British camp, near Dover.

Enter, with drum and colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Gentlemen.

EDMUND

Know of the duke if his last purpose hold,
Or whether since he is advised by aught
To change the course: he's full of alteration
And self-reproving: bring his constant pleasure.

To a Gentleman, who goes out

REGAN

Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

EDMUND

'Tis to be doubted, madam.

REGAN

Now, sweet lord,
You know the goodness I intend upon you:
Tell me--but truly--but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND

In honour'd love.

REGAN

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

EDMUND

That thought abuses you.

REGAN

I am doubtful that you have been conjunct
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.

EDMUND

No, by mine honour, madam.

REGAN

I never shall endure her: dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.

EDMUND

Fear me not:
She and the duke her husband!

Enter, with drum and colours, ALBANY, GONERIL, and Soldiers

GONERIL

[Aside] I had rather lose the battle than that sister
Should loosen him and me.

ALBANY

Our very loving sister, well be-met.
Where I could not be honest,
I never yet was valiant: for this business,
It toucheth us, as France invades our land,
Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear,
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

EDMUND

Sir, you speak nobly.

REGAN

Why is this reason'd?

GONERIL

Combine together 'gainst 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 e'er 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. If you miscarry,

Your business of the world hath so an end,
And machination ceases. Fortune love you.

ALBANY

Stay till I have read the letter.

EDGAR

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

ALBANY

Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook thy paper.

Exit EDGAR

Re-enter EDMUND

EDMUND

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

ALBANY

We will greet the time.

Exit

EDMUND

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

Exit

SCENE III. The British camp near Dover.

Enter, in conquest, with drum and colours, EDMUND, KING LEAR and CORDELIA, prisoners; Captain, Soldiers, & c

EDMUND

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

CORDELIA

We are not the first
Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst.
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.
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 i' 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's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by the moon.

EDMUND

Take them away.

KING LEAR

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense. 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

Come hither, captain; hark.
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: to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword: thy great employment
Will not bear question; either say thou'lt do 't,
Or thrive by other means.

I'll do 't, my lord.

About it; and write happy when thou hast done.
Mark, I say, instantly; and carry it so
As I have set it down.

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

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

Sir, you have the captives
That were the opposites of this day's strife:
We do require them of you, so to use them
As we shall find their merits and our safety
May equally determine.

Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention and appointed guard;
With him I sent the queen:
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

ALBANY

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

REGAN

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

GONERIL

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

REGAN

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

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 look'd but a-squint.

REGAN

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

GONERIL

Mean you to enjoy him?

ALBANY

The let-alone lies not in your good will.

EDMUND

Nor in thine, lord.

ALBANY

Half-blooded fellow, yes.

REGAN

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

ALBANY

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

Pointing to Goneril

For your claim, fair sister,
I bar it in the interest of my wife:
'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,
And I, her husband, contradict your bans.
If you will marry, make your loves to me,
My lady is bespoke.
There is my pledge.

Throwing down a glove

REGAN

Sick, O, sick!

GONERIL

[Aside] If not, I'll ne'er 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 honour firmly.

REGAN

My sickness grows upon me.

ALBANY

She is not well; convey her to my tent.

Exit Regan, led

A trumpet sounds

Enter Edgar.

EDMUND

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 say'st thou to him?

EDGAR

Draw thy sword,

Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,

Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor;

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father;

Conspirant 'gainst this high-illustrious prince;

And, from 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, whereto I speak,

Thou liest.

EDMUND

In wisdom I should ask thy name;

But, since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,

And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,

What safe and nicely I might well delay
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn:
Back do I toss these treasons to thy head;
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
Which, for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,
This sword of mine shall give them instant way,
Where they shall rest for ever. **Trumpets**, speak!

Alarums. They fight. EDMUND falls

GONERIL

This is practise, Gloucester:
 By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer
 An unknown opposite; thou art not vanquish'd,
 But cozen'd and beguiled.

ALBANY

Shut your mouth, dame,
Or with this paper shall I stop it:
No tearing, lady: I perceive you know it.

Gives the letter to EDMUND

GONERIL

Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:
Who can arraign me for't.

Exit GONERIL.

ALBANY

Know'st thou this paper? Most monstrous! oh!

EDMUND

Ask me not what I know.

ALBANY

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

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just:
The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his life.

EDMUND

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

Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife

Gentleman

Help, help, O, help!

EDGAR

What kind of help?

ALBANY

Speak, man.

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 confess'd it.

EDMUND

I was contracted to them both: all three
Now marry in an instant.

Enter Kent

KENT

I am come
To bid my king and master aye good night:
Is he not here?

ALBANY

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

EDMUND

Yet Edmund was beloved:

The one the other poison'd for my sake,
And after slew herself.

Edmund dies

Re-enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms.

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?

ALBANY

Fall, and cease!

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

Prithce, 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.
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.
I am old now,
And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?
Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight.

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,
That, from your first of difference and decay,
Have follow'd your sad steps--

KING LEAR

And my poor fool is hang'd! 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!

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 much
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

EDGAR

He is gone, indeed.

KENT

The wonder is, he hath endured so long:
He but usurp'd his life.

ALBANY

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

To KENT and EDGAR

Friends of my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

KENT

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

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.

Finis.