

King Lear

ACT I

SCENE I. King Lear's palace.

Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND

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 though this knave came something saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; 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.

GLOUCESTER

The king is coming.

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

KING LEAR

Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER

I shall, my liege.

Exeunt GLOUCESTER and EDMUND

KING LEAR

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided

In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent

To shake all cares and business from our age;

Conferring them on younger strengths, while we

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. The princes, France and Burgundy,

Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,

Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,

And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,--

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.

CORDELIA

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

LEAR

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains 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.

CORDELIA

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

KING LEAR

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

CORDELIA

Nothing, my lord.

KING LEAR

Nothing!

CORDELIA

Nothing.

KING LEAR

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA

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

KING LEAR

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

CORDELIA

Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

KING LEAR

But goes thy heart with this?

CORDELIA

Ay, good my lord.

KING LEAR

So young, and so untender?

CORDELIA

So young, my lord, and true.

KING LEAR

Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist, and cease to be;
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever.

KENT

Good my liege,--

KING LEAR

Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her! Call France; who stirs?
Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.
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 coronet part betwixt you.

Giving the crown

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?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound,
When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom;
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;

KING LEAR

Kent, on thy life, no more.

KENT

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

KING LEAR

Out of my sight!

KENT

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

KING LEAR

O, vassal! miscreant!

Laying his hand on his sword

ALBANY / CORNWALL

Dear sir, forbear.

KING LEAR

Kent, turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom: 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.
We first address towards you, 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:
If aught within that little seeming substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,
And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,
She's there, and she is yours.

BURGUNDY

I know no answer.

KING LEAR

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

My lord of Burgundy,
What say you to the lady? Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards that stand
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

BURGUNDY

Royal 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!
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
My love should kindle to inflamed respect.
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:

KING LEAR

Thou hast her, France: let her be thine; for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. Therefore be gone
Without our grace, our love, our benison.
Come, noble Burgundy.

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

KING OF FRANCE

Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA

The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;
And like a sister am most loath to call
Your faults as they are named. Use well our father:

To your professed bosoms I commit him
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.
So, farewell to you both.

REGAN

Prescribe not us our duties.

GONERIL

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

CORDELIA

Time shall unfold what 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; the
observation we have made of it hath not been
little: he always loved our sister most; and
with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off
appears too grossly.

REGAN

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

GONERIL

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

REGAN

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

GONERIL

There is further compliment of leavetaking
between France and him. Pray you, let's hit
together: if our father carry authority with
such dispositions as he bears, this last
surrender of his will but offend us.

REGAN

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? base, base?
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:

Enter GLOUCESTER

GLOUCESTER
Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler parted!
And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power!
Edmund, how now! what news?

EDMUND
So please your lordship, none.

Putting up the letter

GLOUCESTER
Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

EDMUND
I know no news, my lord.

GLOUCESTER
What paper were you reading?

EDMUND
Nothing, my lord.

GLOUCESTER

No? What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of
it into your pocket? 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,

GLOUCESTER

Let's see, let's see.

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

[Reads] '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? a heart and brain
to breed it in?--When came this to you? who
brought it?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

You know the character to be your brother's?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

O villain, villain! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him: abominable villain!

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; Edgar--

Enter EDGAR

And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villanous melancholy,

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.

EDGAR

How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

EDMUND

Come, come; when saw you my father last?

EDGAR

Why, the night gone by.

EDMUND

Spake you with him?

EDGAR

Ay, two hours together.

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

None at all.

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDMUND

That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent forbearance till the spied of his rage goes slower; there's my key: if you do stir abroad, go armed.

EDGAR

Armed, brother!

EDMUND

Brother, I advise you to the best; go armed: I am no honest man if there be any good meaning towards you: I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away.

EDGAR

Shall I hear from you anon?

EDMUND

I do serve you in this business.

Exit EDGAR

A credulous father! and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms,
That he suspects none: on whose foolish honesty
My 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.

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'll have it come to question:
If he dislike it, let him to our sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be over-ruled.

OSWALD

Well, madam.

GONERIL

And let his knights have colder looks among you;
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so:
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak: I'll write straight to my sister,
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. A hall in the same.

Enter KENT, disguised

KENT

If but as well I other accents borrow,
That can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue
For which I razed my likeness. Now, 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.

Enter KING LEAR, Knights, and Attendants

KING LEAR

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 fight when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish.

KING LEAR

What wouldst thou?

KENT

Service.

KING LEAR

Who wouldst thou serve?

KENT

You.

KING LEAR

Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT

No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain 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

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

Enter Oswald

KING LEAR

[To Oswald]

Go you, call hither my fool.

OSWALD

No.

KING LEAR

Come you hither, 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

KENT

Come, sir, arise, away!

Pushes OSWALD out

KING LEAR

Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of thy service.

Giving KENT money

Enter Fool

Fool

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

Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out,

KING LEAR

A pestilent gall to me!

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;

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

No, lad; teach me.

Fool

That lord that counsell'd thee

To give away thy land,

Come place him here by me,

Do thou for him stand:

The sweet and bitter fool

Will presently appear;

The one in motley here,

The other found out there.

KING LEAR

Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool

All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

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.

Enter GONERIL

KING LEAR

How now, daughter!
Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown.

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.

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?
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool

Lear's shadow.

GONERIL

This admiration, sir, is much o' the savour
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright:
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so 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;

KING LEAR

Darkness and devils!

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 is be so: yet have I left a daughter,
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
She'll flay thy wolvis visage. Thou shalt find
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever.

Exeunt KING LEAR, KENT, and Attendants

Fool

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

Exit

GONERIL

This man hath had good counsel:--a hundred knights!
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
At point a hundred knights: yes, that, on every dream,
Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard his dotage with their powers,
And hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say!

ALBANY

Well, you may fear too far.

GONERIL

Safer than trust too far:
Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart.
What he hath 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

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

OSWALD

Yes, madam.

GONERIL

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

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 anything you
know than comes from her demand out of the letter.
If your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

KENT

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

Exit

Fool

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

KING LEAR

Ay, boy.

Fool

Then, I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall ne'er go slip-shod.

KING LEAR

Ha, ha, ha!

Fool

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

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!

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. GLOUCESTER's castle.

EDMUND

[Whispering to Edgar]

I hear my father coming: pardon me:

In cunning I must draw my sword upon you

[aloud] Draw; seem to defend yourself; now quit you well.

Yield: come before my father.

Fly, brother. So, farewell.

Exit EDGAR

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion.

Wounds his arm

Father, father!

Stop, stop! No help?

Enter GLOUCESTER,

GLOUCESTER

Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

EDMUND

Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

Pursue him, ho! Go after.

Exeunt some Servants

By no means what?

EDMUND

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;

GLOUCESTER

Let him fly far:

All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;

The duke must grant me that: besides, his picture

I will send far and near, that all the kingdom

May have the due note of him; and of my land,

Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means

To make thee capable.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, and Attendants

CORNWALL

How now, my noble friend! since I came hither,

Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

REGAN

If it be true, all vengeance comes too short

Which can pursue the offender. How dost, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

O, madam, my old heart is crack'd, it's crack'd!

REGAN

What, did my father's godson seek your life?

He whom my father named? your Edgar?

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

Was he not companion with the riotous knights

That tend upon my father?

GLOUCESTER

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

EDMUND

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

REGAN

No marvel, then, though he were ill affected:
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,
To have the expense and waste of his revenues.
I have this present evening from my sister
Been well inform'd of them; and with such cautions,
That if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.

CORNWALL

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

EDMUND

'Twas my duty, sir.

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

Is he pursued?

GLOUCESTER

Ay, my good lord.

CORNWALL

If he be taken, he shall never more
Be fear'd of doing harm: make your own purpose,
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
So much commend itself, you shall be ours:
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need;
You we first seize on.

EDMUND

I shall serve you, sir,

GLOUCESTER

For him I thank your grace.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night:
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some poise,
Wherein we must have use of your advice:
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences, which I least thought it fit
To answer from our home; Our good old friend,
bestow Your needful counsel to our business,
Which craves the instant use.

GLOUCESTER

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

Exeunt

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

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

OSWALD

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

KENT

Fellow, I know thee.

OSWALD

What dost thou know me for?

KENT

A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave: 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; and take vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father: draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways.

OSWALD

Help, ho! murder! help!

KENT

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

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?

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

Weapons! arms! What 's the matter here?

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

The messengers from our sister and the king.

CORNWALL

What is your difference? speak.

OSWALD

I am scarce in breath, my lord.

CORNWALL

Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

OSWALD

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

CORNWALL

Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

What was the offence you gave him?

OSWALD

I never gave him any:

It pleased the king his master very late

To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;

When he, conjunct and flattering his displeasure,

Tripp'd me behind; being down, insulted, rail'd,

And put upon him such a deal of man,

That worthied him, got praises of the king

For him attempting who was self-subdued;

And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,

Drew on me here again.

KENT

None of these rogues and cowards

But Ajax is their fool.

CORNWALL

Fetch forth the stocks!

You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,

We'll teach you--

KENT

Sir, I am too old to learn:

Call not your stocks for me: I serve the king;

On whose employment I was sent to you:

You shall do small respect, show too bold malice

Against the grace and person of my master,

Stocking his messenger.

CORNWALL

Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honour,

There shall he sit till noon.

REGAN

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

KENT

Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,

You should not use me so.

REGAN

Sir, being his knave, I will.

CORNWALL

This is a fellow of the 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: your purposed low correction

Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches

For pilferings and most common trespasses

Are punish'd with: 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

Good king, that must approve the common saw,
Thou out of heaven's benediction comest

To the warm sun!

Nothing almost sees miracles
But misery: I know 'tis from Cordelia,
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my obscured course; and shall find time
From this enormous state, seeking to give
Losses their remedies. All weary and o'erwatch'd,
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold
This shameful lodging.
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, who, with roaring voices,
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;

And with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

Exit

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

Enter KING LEAR, 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, 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.

KENT

My lord, when at their home

I did commend your highness' letters to them,

Ere I was risen from the place that show'd

My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,

Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth

From Goneril his mistress salutations;

Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,

Which presently they read: on whose contents,

They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse;

Commanded me to follow, and attend

The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks:

And meeting here the other messenger,

Whose welcome, I perceived, had poison'd mine,--

Being the very fellow that of late

Display'd so saucily against your highness,--

Having more man than wit about me, drew:

He raised the house with loud and coward cries.

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

Fool

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

Fathers that wear rags

Do make their children blind;

But fathers that bear bags

Shall see their children kind.

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

KING LEAR

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!

Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,

Thy element's below! Where is this daughter?

KENT

With the earl, sir, here within.

KING LEAR

Follow me not;

Stay here.

Exit

Fool

Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

KENT

None.

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. Let go thy hold when a great wheel
runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with
following it: but the great one that goes up the
hill, let him draw thee after. When a wise man
gives thee better counsel, give me mine again: I
would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

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;

The images of revolt and flying off.

Fetch me a better answer.

GLOUCESTER

My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality of the duke;

How 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!
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!

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

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 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?
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:
'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;
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness!

CORNWALL

Fie, sir, fie!

KING LEAR

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, to cut off my train,
To bandy hasty words, to-

REGAN

Good sir, to the purpose.

KING LEAR

Who put my man i' the stocks?

Enter OSWALD

REGAN

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

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

GONERIL

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

KING LEAR

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:

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?
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest born, I could as well be brought
To knee his throne, and, squire-like; pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom.

Pointing at OSWALD

GONERIL

At your choice, sir.

KING LEAR

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,

Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:
Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.

REGAN

Not altogether so:
I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. what, fifty followers?
Is it not well? What should you need of more?

GONERIL

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

REGAN

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

KING LEAR

I gave you all--

REGAN

And in good time you gave it.

KING LEAR

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!
 If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
 Against their father, fool me not so much
 To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
 And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
 Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
 I will have such revenges on you both,
 That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
 What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be
 The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep
 No, I'll not weep:
 I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
 Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
 Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

Exeunt KING LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT, and Fool

Storm and tempest

CORNWALL

Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

GONERIL

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.
 My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.
 Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds
 Do sorely ruffle; for many miles a bout
 There's scarce a bush.

REGAN

O, sir, to wilful men,
 The injuries that they themselves procure
 Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors:

CORNWALL

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

Exeunt

ACT III (scene I cut)

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,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, an germens spill at once,
That make ingrateful man!

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.

Enter KENT

KENT

Alas, sir, are you here? things that love night
Love not such nights as these; the wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark,
And make them keep their caves: since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the fear.

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:
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd
Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!

KENT

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

KING LEAR

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

Fool

[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.

Exit

SCENE III. Gloucester's castle.

Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND

GLOUCESTER

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

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
When the mind's free,
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

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 halters
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.

KING LEAR

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

KENT

He hath no daughters, sir.

KING LEAR

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

Fool

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

EDGAR

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

Storm still

KING LEAR

Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer
with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.
Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou
owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep
no wool, 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

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

But mice and rats, and such small deer,

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

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

GLOUCESTER

What, hath your grace no better company?

EDGAR

The prince of darkness is a gentleman:

Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.

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: ah, that good Kent!
He said it would be thus, poor banish'd man!
Thou say'st the king grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself: I had a son,
Now outlaw'd from my blood; 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.

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;
but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reprovable
badness in himself.

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

o with me to the duchess.

EDMUND

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

CORNWALL

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

Exeunt

SCENE VI. A chamber in a farmhouse adjoining the castle.

Enter GLOUCESTER and KENT and EDGAR

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:
If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
With thine, and all that offer to defend him,
Stand in assured loss

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,
He childed as I father'd! Tom, away!
Mark the high noises; and thyself bewray,
When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,
In thy just proof, repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the king!

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.

CORNWALL

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

beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most festinate preparation: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

Enter OSWALD

How now! where's the king?

OSWALD

My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence.

CORNWALL

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

Exeunt other Servants

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, -

CORNWALL

Bind him, I say.

Servants bind him

REGAN

Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN plucks his beard

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

So white, and such a traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Naughty lady,
These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,
Will quicken, and accuse thee: I am your host:
With robbers' hands my hospitable favours
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

Cunning.

REGAN

And false.

CORNWALL

Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOUCESTER

To Dover.

REGAN

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

CORNWALL

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover, 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.
If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,
Thou shouldst have said 'Good porter, turn the key,'
All cruels else subscribed: but I shall see
The winged vengeance overtake such children.

CORNWALL

See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

One side will mock another; the other too.

CORNWALL

If you see vengeance,--

Servant

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

REGAN

How now, you dog!

CORNWALL

My villain!

They draw and fight

Servant

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

REGAN

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!

Takes a sword, and runs at him behind

Servant

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

Dies

CORNWALL

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

GLOUCESTER

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

Exeunt severally

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

Enter EDGAR

EDGAR

Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man

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

GLOUCESTER

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

[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?

EDGAR (disguised voice)

Madman and beggar too.

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 whistle.

ALBANY

O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
That nature, which contemns its origin,
Cannot be 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?
A father, and a gracious aged man,
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
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 eye!
This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge! But, O poor Gloucester!
Lost he his other eye?

Messenger

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

GONERIL

[Aside] One way I like this well;
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life: another way,
The news is not so tart.--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. (Scene 3 cut)

Enter CORDELIA, [reading a letter]

CORDELIA

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

Exit an Officer

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; 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:

If I could bear it longer, and not fall

To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,

My snuff and loathed part of nature should

Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!

Now, fellow, fare thee well.

He falls forward

EDGAR

Alive or dead?

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

Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.

What are you, sir?

GLOUCESTER

Away, and let me die.

EDGAR

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

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!--'Ay' and 'no'
 too was no good divinity. When the rain came to
 wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when
 the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I

found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are
 not men o' their words: they told me I was 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?
 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.

EDGAR

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

KING LEAR

Read.

GLOUCESTER

What, with the case of eyes?

KING LEAR

What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes
 with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond
 justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in
 thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which

is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen
a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

GLOUCESTER

Ay, sir.

KING LEAR

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

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind

For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;

Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:

Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.

None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:

Take that of me, my friend, who have the power

To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes;

And like a scurvy politician, seem

To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now:

Pull off my boots: harder, harder: so.

EDGAR

O, matter and impertinency 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: this a good block;

It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe

A troop of horse with felt: I'll put 't in proof;

And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law,

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

Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants

Gentleman

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

Your most dear daughter--

KING LEAR

No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even

The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;

You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons;

I am cut to the brains.

Gentleman

You shall have any thing.

Good sir,--

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! Thou hast one daughter,
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.

EDGAR

Hail, gentle sir.

Gentleman

Sir, speed you: what's your will?

EDGAR

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

Gentleman

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

EDGAR

But, by your favour,
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 bidding.

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.

EDGAR

Ch'ill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

OSWALD

Let go, slave, or thou diest!

EDGAR

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

OSWALD

Out, dunghill!

EDGAR

Ch'ill pick your teeth, zir: come; no matter vor
your foins.

They fight, and EDGAR knocks him down

OSWALD

Slave, thou hast slain me: villain, take my purse:
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body;
And give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund earl of Gloucester; seek him out
Upon the British party: O, untimely death!

Dies

EDGAR

I know thee well: a serviceable villain;

As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

GLOUCESTER

What, is he dead?

EDGAR

Sit you down, father; rest you

Let's see these pockets: the letters that he speaks of
May be my friends. He's dead; Let us see:
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not:
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;
Their papers, is more lawful.

Reads

'Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have
many opportunities to cut him off: if your will
want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered.
There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror:
then am I the prisoner, and his bed my 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! Here, in the sands,

Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified

Of murderous lechers: and in the mature time

With this ungracious paper strike the sight

Of the death practised duke: for him 'tis well

That of thy death and business I can tell.

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; Gentleman, and others attending.

Enter CORDELIA, KENT, and Doctor

CORDELIA

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

KENT

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.

CORDELIA

Be better suited:

These weeds are memories of those worser hours:
I prithee, put them off.

KENT

Pardon me, dear madam;

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

CORDELIA

Then be't so, my good lord.

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?
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick, cross lightning? to watch--poor perdu!--
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine, and rogues forlorn,
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him.

KENT

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

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.

Exit

ACT V

SCENE I. The British camp, near Dover.

Enter, with drum and colours, EDMUND, REGAN,

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

EDMUND

Fear me not.

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

GONERIL

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

ALBANY

Our very loving sister, well be-met.
Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter,
and 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 II. A field between the two camps.

*Alarum within. Enter, with drum and colours, KING LEAR,
CORDELIA, and Soldiers, over the stage; and exeunt*

Enter EDGAR and GLOUCESTER

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

And that's true too.

Exeunt

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,

EDMUND

Take them away.

KING LEAR

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

Exeunt KING LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded

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

ALBANY

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

EDMUND

Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention and appointed guard;
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more,
To pluck the common bosom on his side,
An turn our impress'd lances in our eyes
Which do command them. With him I sent the queen;
My reason all the same; and they are ready
To-morrow, or at further space, to appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this time
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed
By those that feel their sharpness:
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

ALBANY

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

REGAN

That's as we list to grace him.
Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers;
Bore the commission of my place and person;

The which immediacy may well stand up,
And call itself your brother.

GONERIL

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

REGAN

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

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.

GONERIL

An interlude!

ALBANY

Thou art arm'd, Gloucester: let the trumpet sound:
 If none appear to prove upon thy head
 Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
 There is my pledge;

Throwing down a glove

I'll prove it on thy heart,
 Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
 Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

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.

ALBANY

A herald, ho!

EDMUND

A herald, ho, a herald!

ALBANY

Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,
 All levied in my name, have in my name
 Took their discharge.

REGAN

My sickness grows upon me.

ALBANY

She is not well; convey her to my tent.

*Exit Regan, led***EDGAR**

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

EDMUND

Himself: what say'st thou to him?

EDGAR

Draw thy sword,
 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

Back do I toss these treasons to thy head;
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
Which, for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,
This sword of mine shall give them instant way,
Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak!

Alarums. They fight. EDMUND falls

ALBANY

Save him, save him!

GONERIL

This is 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: Hold, sir:
Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil:
No tearing, lady: I perceive you know it.

Gives the letter to EDMUND

GONERIL

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

ALBANY

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

GONERIL

Ask me not what I know.

Exit

ALBANY

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

EDMUND

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

EDGAR

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

EDMUND

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

ALBANY

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

EDGAR

Worthy prince, I know't.

ALBANY

Where have you hid yourself?

How have you known the miseries of your father?

EDGAR

By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;

And when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst!

The bloody proclamation to escape,

That follow'd me so near,--O, our lives' sweetness!

That we the pain of death would hourly die

Rather than die at once!--taught me to shift

Into a madman's rags; to assume a semblance

That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit

Met I my father with his bleeding rings,

Their precious stones new lost: became his guide,

Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair;

Never,--O fault!--reveal'd myself unto him,

Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd:

Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,

I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last

Told him my pilgrimage: but his flaw'd heart,

Alack, too weak the conflict to support!

'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,

Burst smilingly.

EDMUND

This speech of yours hath moved me,

And shall perchance do good: but speak you on;

You look as you had something more to say.

ALBANY

If there be more, more woeful, hold it in;

For I am almost ready to dissolve,

Hearing of this.

EDGAR

Whilst I was big in clamour came there in a man,

Who, having seen me in my worst estate,

Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding

Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms

He fastened on my neck, and bellow'd out

As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;

Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him

That ever ear received: which in recounting

His grief grew puissant and the strings of life

Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,

And there I left him tranced.

ALBANY

But who was this?

EDGAR

Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise

Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service

Improper for a slave.

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.

EDGAR

Here comes Kent.

ALBANY

Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead:
This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity.

Exit Gentleman

Enter KENT

O, is this he?
The time will not allow the compliment
Which very manners urges.

KENT

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

ALBANY

Great thing of us forgot!
Speak, Edmund, where's the king? and where's Cordelia?
See'st thou this object, Kent?

The bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in

KENT

Alack, why thus?

EDMUND

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

ALBANY

Even so. Cover their faces.

EDMUND

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

ALBANY

Run, run, O, run!

Exit EDGAR

EDMUND

He hath commission from thy wife and me
To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
To lay the blame upon her own despair,
That she fordid herself.

ALBANY

The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

EDMUND is borne off

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

KING LEAR

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
 That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!
 I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
 She's dead as earth.

KENT

Is this the promised end
 O my good master!

KING LEAR

Prithee, away.

EDGAR

'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

KING LEAR

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

Captain

'Tis true, my lords, he did.

KING LEAR

This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT

The same,
 Your servant Kent
 all's cheerless, dark, and deadly.
 Your eldest daughters have fordone them selves,
 And desperately are dead.

KING LEAR

Ay, so I think.

ALBANY

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

EDGAR

Very bootless.

Enter a Captain

Captain

Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALBANY

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

To EDGAR and KENT

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

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.

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.

ALBANY

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

Exeunt, with a dead march