

KING LEAR

William Shakespeare

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KING LEAR SYNOPSIS

King Lear is one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, written as early as 1603 and published in 1605. Certain aspects of the text have been criticized by literary experts. It has two original and two authorized editions. The play tells the story of King Lear, an aging monarch who decides to inherit the throne from his three daughters, but only one of them will be able to accede to it.

To determine who will win, the king decides to put them to the test and asks them to declare their love for him. Cordelia, the youngest, refuses, saying that her love cannot be expressed in words. The king disinherits her. As for the rest of the daughters, the situation was even worse. From then on, this tragedy shows the consequences of the king's wrong decisions.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Lear, King of Britain.

King of France.

Duke of Burgundy.

Duke of Cornwall.

Duke of Albany.

Earl of Kent.

Earl of Gloucester.

Edgar, son of Gloucester.

Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester.

Curan, a courtier.

Old Man, tenant to Gloucester.

Doctor.

Lear's Fool.

Oswald, steward to Goneril.

A Captain under Edmund's command.

Gentlemen. A Herald.

Servants to Cornwall. Goneril, daughter to Lear. Regan, daughter to Lear. Cordelia, daughter to Lear.

Knights attending on Lear, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers, Attendants.

Scene: - Britain.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

[King Lear's Palace.]

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund. [Kent and Gloucester converse.]

Edmund stands back.]

Kent. I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than

Cornwall.

Glou. It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most, for equalities are so weigh'd that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

Kent. Is not this your son, my lord?

Glou. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him that now I am braz'd to't.

Kent. I cannot conceive you.

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

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

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

Edm. [comes forward] No, my lord.

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

Edm. My services to your lordship.

Kent. I must love you, and sue to know you better. Edm. Sir, I shall study deserving.

Glou. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. Sound a sennet.

The King is coming.

Enter one bearing a coronet; then Lear; then the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall; next, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, with Followers.

Lear. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester. Glou. I shall, my liege.

Exeunt [Gloucester and Edmund].

Lear. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose. Give me the map there. Know 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 (Since now we will divest us
both of rule,

Interest of territory, cares of state),

Which of you shall we say doth love us most? That we our largest
bounty may extend

Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril, Our eldest-born,
speak first.

Gon. Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;

Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty; Beyond what can be
valued, rich or rare;

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;

As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable. Beyond all
manner of so much I love you.

Cor. [aside] What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent. Lear.
Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,

With shadowy forests and with champains 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.

Reg. Sir, I am made

Of the selfsame 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.

Cor. [aside] Then poor Cordelia!

And yet not so; since I am sure my love's

More richer than my tongue.

Lear. To thee and thine hereditary ever Remain this ample third of
our fair kingdom, No less in space, validity, and pleasure

Than that 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; what can you say to draw A third more
opulent than your sisters? Speak. Cor. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing?

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing can come of nothing. Speak again.

Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty

According to my bond; no more nor less.

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

Cor. Good my lord,

You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me; I Return those duties back as are right fit, Obey you, love you, and most honour you. Why have my sisters husbands, if they say They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,

That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

Half my love with him, half my care and duty. Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,

To love my father all.

Lear. But goes thy heart with this? Cor. Ay, good my lord.

Lear. So young, and so untender?

Cor. So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so! thy truth then be thy dower! For, by the sacred radiance of the sun, The mysteries of 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. The barbarous Scythian, Or he that makes his generation messes

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom

Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd, As thou my sometime daughter.

Kent. Good my liege-

Lear. Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath. I lov'd 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.

I do invest you jointly in my power, Preeminence, and all the large
effects

That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,

With reservation of an hundred knights, By you to be sustain'd,
shall our abode

Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain

The name, and all th' additions to a king. The sway, Revenue,
execution of the rest,

Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,

This coronet part betwixt you. Kent. Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,

Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,

As my great patron thought on in my prayers-

Lear. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft. Kent. Let it
fall rather, though the fork invade

The region of my heart! Be Kent unmannerly

When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man? Think'st thou
that duty shall have dread to speak

When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound

When majesty falls to folly. Reverse thy doom; And in thy best
consideration check

This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment, Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound

Reverbs no hollowness.

Lear. Kent, on thy life, no more!

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn

To wage against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it, Thy safety being the motive.

Lear. Out of my sight!

Kent. See better, Lear, and let me still remain

The true blank of thine eye. Lear. Now by Apollo-

Kent. Now by Apollo, King, Thou swear'st thy gods in vain. Lear. O vassal! miscreant! [Lays his hand on his sword.] Alb., Corn. Dear sir, forbear!

Kent. Do!

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,

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

Lear. Hear me, recreant!

On thine allegiance, hear me!

Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow- Which we durst
never yet- and with strain'd pride To come between our sentence
and our power,- Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,-
Our potency made good, take thy reward. Five days we do allot
thee for provision To shield thee from diseases of the world, And
on the sixth to turn thy hated back

Upon our kingdom. If, on the tenth day following, Thy banish'd
trunk be found in our dominions,

The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,

This shall not be revok'd.

Kent. Fare thee well, King. Since 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. Enter Gloucester, with France and Burgundy; Attendants.

Glou. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord. Lear. My Lord of
Burgundy,

We first address toward 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?

Bur. Most royal Majesty,

I crave no more than hath your Highness offer'd, Nor will you tender less.

Lear. Right noble Burgundy,

When she was dear to us, we did hold her so; But now her price is fall'n. Sir, there she stands. If aught within that little seeming substance,

Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,

And nothing more, may fitly like your Grace, She's there, and she is yours.

Bur. I know no answer.

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

Dow'r'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath, Take her, or leave her?

Bur. Pardon me, royal sir.

Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the pow'r that made me,

I tell you all her wealth. [To France] For you, great King, I would
not from your love make such a stray

To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you

T' avert your liking a more worthier way Than on a wretch whom
nature is asham'd Almost t' acknowledge hers.

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 Should never plant in me.

Cor. 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, murther, or foulness, No unchaste action or
dishonoured step,

That hath depriv'd 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. Lear. Better thou

Hadst not been born than not t' have pleas'd me better.

France. Is it but this- a tardiness in nature

Which often leaves the history unspoke

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

Bur. Royal Lear,

Give but that portion which yourself propos'd, And here I take Cordelia by the hand,

Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear. Nothing! I have sworn; I am firm.

Bur. I am sorry then you have so lost a father

That you must lose a husband. Cor. Peace be with Burgundy!

Since that respects of fortune are his love, I shall not be his wife.

France. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;

Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd! 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 inflam'd respect.

Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance, Is queen of us,
of ours, and our fair France.

Not all the dukes in wat'rish Burgundy

Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me. Bid them farewell,
Cordelia, though unkind. Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

Lear. Thou hast her, France; let her be thine; for we

Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see That face of hers again.
Therefore be gone Without our grace, our love, our benison. Come,
noble Burgundy.

Flourish. Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, [Cornwall, Albany, Gloucester,
and Attendants].

France. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cor. 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 nam'd. 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.

Gon. Prescribe not us our duties. Reg. Let your study
Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you

At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted, And well are worth
the want that you have wanted.

Cor. Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides. Who cover
faults, at last shame them derides.

Well may you prosper!

France. Come, my fair Cordelia. Exeunt France and Cordelia.

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

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

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is. The observation we have made of it hath not been little. He always lov'd our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

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

Gon. 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-ingraffed condition, but therewithal

the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with

them.

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

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking 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.

Reg. We shall further think on't.

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

Exeunt.

SCENE II.

The Earl of Gloucester's Castle.

Enter [Edmund the] Bastard solus, [with a letter]. Edm. Thou,
Nature, art my goddess; to thy law My services are bound.

Wherefore should I

Stand in the plague of custom, and permit

The curiosity of nations to deprive me,

For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines Lag of a
brother? Why bastard? wherefore base? When my dimensions are
as well compact,

My mind as generous, and my shape as true, As honest madam's
issue? Why brand they us With base? with baseness? bastardy?
base, base? Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take

More composition and fierce quality Than doth, within a dull, stale,
tired bed, Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops Got 'tween
asleep and wake? Well then, Legitimate Edgar, I must have your
land.

Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund As to th' legitimate.
Fine word- 'legitimate'! Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base Shall top th' legitimate.
I grow; I prosper. Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter Gloucester.

Glou. Kent banish'd thus? and France in choler parted? And the
King gone to-night? subscrib'd his pow'r? Confin'd to exhibition?
All this done

Upon the gad? Edmund, how now? What news? Edm. So please
your lordship, none.

[Puts up the letter.]

Glou. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter? Edm. I know
no news, my lord.

Glou. What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord.

Glou. No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your
pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide

itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

Edm. I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter from my brother

that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I have perus'd, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

Glou. Give me the letter, sir.

Edm. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Glou. Let's see, let's see!

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

Glou. (reads) 'This policy and reverence of age makes the world

bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle

and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffer'd. Come to me, that

of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I

wak'd him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,

'EDGAR.'

Hum! Conspiracy? 'Sleep till I wak'd 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? Edm. It was not brought me, my lord: there's the cunning of it. I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet. Glou. You know the character to be your brother's? Edm. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but in respect of that, I would fain think it were not. Glou. It is his. Edm. It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents. Glou. Hath he never before sounded you in this business? Edm. Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue. Glou. O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him. I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain! Where is he? Edm. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in

your own honour and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

Glou. Think you so? Edm. If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening. Glou. He cannot be such a monster. Edm. Nor is not, sure. Glou. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you; frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution. Edm. I will seek him, sir, presently; convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal. Glou. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banish'd! his offence, honesty! 'Tis

strange. Exit. Edm. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whore-master man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's Tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Fut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar-

Enter Edgar.

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

Edg. How now, brother Edmund? What serious contemplation are you in? Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day,

what should follow these eclipses. Edg. Do you busy yourself with that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily: as

of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

Edg. How long have you been a sectary astronomical? Edm. Come, come! When saw you my father last? Edg. The night gone by.

Edm. Spake you with him? Edg. Ay, two hours together.

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

Edg. None at all.

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

Edg. Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edm. That's my fear. I pray you have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower; and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray ye, go! There's my key. If you do stir abroad, go arm'd.

Edg. Arm'd, brother?

Edm. Brother, I advise you to the best. Go arm'd. I am no honest man if there be any good meaning toward you. I have told you what I

have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it. Pray you, away!

Edg. Shall I hear from you anon?

Edm. I do serve you in this business. Exit Edgar.

A credulous father! and a brother noble,

Whose nature is so far from doing harms

That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty

My practices ride easy! I see the business. Let me, if not by birth,
have lands by wit; All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. Exit.

SCENE III.

The Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Goneril and [her] Steward [Oswald].

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

Osw. Ay, madam.

Gon. By day and night, he wrongs me! Every hour

He flashes into one gross crime or other

That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.

His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us

On every trifle. When he returns from hunting, I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.

If you come slack of former services,

You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer. [Horns within.]

Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please, You and your fellows. I'd have it come to question. If he distaste it, let him to our sister,

Whose mind and mine I know in that are one, Not to be overrul'd.
Idle old man,

That still would manage those authorities

That he hath given away! Now, by my life, Old fools are babes again, and must be us'd

With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd. Remember what I have said.

Osw. Very well, madam.

Gon. 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.

The Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Kent, [disguised].

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

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

Horns within. Enter Lear, [Knights,] and Attendants.

Lear. Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready. [Exit an
Attendant.] How now? What art thou?

Kent. A man, sir.

Lear. What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us? Kent. I do profess to be no less than I seem, to serve him truly that will put me in trust, to love him that is honest, to converse with him that is wise and says little, to fear judgment, to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish. Lear. What art thou?

Kent. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the King. Lear. If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent. Service.

Lear. Who wouldst thou serve? Kent. You.

Lear. Dost thou know me, fellow?

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

Lear. What's that? Kent. Authority.

Lear. What services canst thou do?

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

Lear. How old art thou?

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

Lear. Follow me; thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no worse after

dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho, dinner! Where's my knave? my fool? Go you and call my fool hither. [Exit an attendant.]

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

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

Osw. So please you- Exit.

Lear. What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back. [Exit a Knight.] Where's my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

[Enter Knight]

How now? Where's that mongrel?

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

Lear. Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd him?

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

Lear. He would not?

Knight. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but to my judgment your Highness is not entertain'd with that ceremonious affection as you were wont. There's a great abatement of kindness appears

as well in the general dependants as in the Duke himself also and your daughter.

Lear. Ha! say'st thou so?

Knight. I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your Highness wrong'd. Lear. Thou but rememb'rest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into't. But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days.

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

Lear. No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her. [Exit Knight.] Go you, call hither my fool.

[Exit an Attendant.]

Enter [Oswald the] Steward.

O, you, sir, you! Come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir? Osw. My lady's father.

Lear. 'My lady's father'? My lord's knave! You whoreson dog! you slave! you cur!

Osw. I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon. Lear. Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?

[Strikes him.]

Osw. I'll not be stricken, my lord.

Kent. Nor tripp'd neither, you base football player? [Trips up his heels.]

Lear. I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee. Kent. Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences. Away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry; but away! Go to! Have you wisdom? So.

[Pushes him out.]

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

Enter Fool.

Fool. Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb. [Offers Kent his cap.]

Lear. How now, my pretty knave? How dost thou? Fool. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb. Kent. Why, fool?

Fool. Why? For taking one's part that's out of favour. Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly.

There, take my coxcomb! Why, this fellow hath banish'd two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. If

thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.- How now,

nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters! Lear. Why, my boy?

Fool. If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself.

There's mine! beg another of thy daughters. Lear. Take heed, sirrah- the whip.

Fool. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd out, when

Lady the brach may stand by th' fire and stink. Lear. A pestilent gall to me!

Fool. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

Lear. Do.

Fool. Mark it, nuncle.

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

Leave thy drink and thy whore, And keep in-a-door,

And thou shalt have more Than two tens to a score. Kent. This is nothing, fool.

Fool. Then 'tis like the breath of an unfeed lawyer- you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle? Lear. Why, no, boy. Nothing can be made out of nothing. Fool. [to Kent] Prithee tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to. He will not believe a fool.

Lear. A bitter fool!

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

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.

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

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

Kent. This is not altogether fool, my lord.

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

Lear. What two crowns shall they be?

Fool. Why, after I have cut the egg i' th' middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' th' middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipp'd that first finds it so.

[Sings] Fools had ne'er less grace in a year, For wise men are grown foppish;

They know not how their wits to wear, Their manners are so apish.

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

Fool. I have us'd it, nuncle, ever since thou mad'st thy daughters thy mother; for when thou gav'st them the rod, and put'st down

thine own breeches,

[Sings] Then they for sudden joy did weep, And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep

And go the fools among.

Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie.
I would fain learn to lie.

Lear. An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipp'd.

Fool. I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have
me whipp'd for speaking true; thou'lt have me whipp'd for lying;
and sometimes I am whipp'd for holding my peace. I had rather
be any kind o' thing than a fool! And yet I would not be thee,
nuncle. Thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' th'
middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

Enter Goneril.

Lear. How now, daughter? What makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much o' late i' th' frown.

Fool. Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for

her frowning. Now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now: I am a fool, thou art nothing.

[To Goneril] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue. So your face bids me, though you say nothing. Mum, mum!

He that keeps nor crust nor crum,

Weary of all, shall want some.-

[Points at Lear] That's a sheal'd peascod. Gon. Not only, sir, this your all-licens'd fool, But other of your insolent retinue

Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth

In rank and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir,

I had thought, by making this well known unto you, To have found
a safe redress, but now grow fearful, By what yourself, too, late
have spoke and done, That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance; which if you should, the fault Would not scape
censure, nor the redresses sleep, Which, in the tender of a
wholesome weal,

Might in their working do you that offence Which else were shame,
that then necessity Must call discreet proceeding.

Fool. For you know, nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long

That it had it head bit off by it young.

So out went the candle, and we were left darkling. Lear. Are you
our daughter?

Gon. 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!

Lear. Doth any here know me? This is not Lear.

Doth Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes? Either his
notion weakens, his discernings

Are lethargied- Ha! waking? 'Tis not so! Who is it that can tell me
who I am? Fool. Lear's shadow.

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

I had daughters.

Fool. Which they will make an obedient father. Lear. Your name,
fair gentlewoman?

Gon. This admiration, sir, is much o' th' savour

Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you

To understand my purposes aright.

As you are old and reverend, 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 grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak

For instant remedy. Be then desir'd

By her that else will take the thing she begs

A little to disquantity your train,

And the remainder that shall still depend To be such men as may
besort your age, Which know themselves, and you.

Lear. Darkness and devils!

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

Gon. You strike my people, and your disorder'd rabble

Make servants of their betters. Enter Albany.

Lear. Woe that too late repents!- O, sir, are you come?

Is it your will? Speak, sir!- Prepare my horses. Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,

More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child

Than the sea-monster! Alb. Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear. [to Goneril] Detested kite, thou liest!

My train are men of choice and rarest parts, That all particulars of duty know

And in the most exact regard support

The worships of their name.- O most small fault, How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!

Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature

From the fix'd place; drew from my heart all love

And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!

Beat at this gate that let thy folly in [Strikes his head.] And thy
dear judgment out! Go, go, my people.

Alb. My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant

Of what hath mov'd you. Lear. It may be so, my lord.

Hear, Nature, hear! dear goddess, hear! Suspend thy purpose, if
thou didst intend To make this creature fruitful.

Into her womb convey sterility;

Dry up in her the organs of increase;

And from her derogate body never spring A babe to honour her! If
she must teem, Create her child of spleen, that it may live And be

a thwart disnatur'd torment to her. Let it stamp wrinkles in her
brow of youth,

With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks, Turn all her mother's
pains and benefits

To laughter and contempt, that she may feel

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is

To have a thankless child! Away, away! Exit.

Alb. Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

Gon. Never afflict yourself to know the cause; But let his
disposition have that scope

That dotage gives it. Enter Lear.

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

Alb. What's the matter, sir?

Lear. I'll tell thee. [To Goneril] Life and death! I am asham'd

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus; That these hot tears, which break from me perforce, Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee! Th' untented woundings of a father's curse

Pierce every sense about thee!- Old fond eyes, Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,

And cast you, with the waters that you lose, To temper clay. Yea, is it come to this?

Let it be so. Yet have I left a daughter, Who I am sure is kind and comfortable.

When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails

She'll flay thy wolvisish visage. Thou shalt find

That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think

I have cast off for ever; thou shalt, I warrant thee. Exeunt [Lear, Kent, and Attendants].

Gon. Do you mark that, my lord? Alb. I cannot be so partial, Goneril, To the great love I bear you -

Gon. Pray you, content.- What, Oswald, ho!

[To the Fool] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master!
Fool. Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry! Take the fool with thee. A fox
when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,

Should sure to the slaughter, If my cap would buy a halter. So the
fool follows after. Exit.

Gon. 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 pow'rs And hold our lives in
mercy.- Oswald, I say! Alb. Well, you may fear too far.

Gon. 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 th'
unfitness-

Enter [Oswald the] Steward. How now, Oswald?

What, have you writ that letter to my sister? Osw. Yes, madam.

Gon. Take you some company, and away to horse!

Inform her full of my particular fear,

And thereto add such reasons of your own

As may compact it more. Get you gone,

And hasten your return. [Exit Oswald.] No, no, my lord! This milky gentleness and course of yours,

Though I condemn it not, yet, under pardon,

You are much more at task for want of wisdom

Than prais'd for harmful mildness.

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

Gon. Nay then-

Alb. Well, well; th' event.

Exeunt.

SCENE V.

Court before the Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool.

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

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

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

Lear. Ay, boy.

Fool. Then I prithee be merry. Thy wit shall ne'er go slip-shod. Lear. Ha, ha, ha!

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

Lear. What canst tell, boy?

Fool. She'll taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' th' middle on's face? Lear. No.

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

Lear. I did her wrong.

Fool. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell? Lear. No.

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

Fool. Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his

daughters,

and leave his horns without a case.

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

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

Lear. Because they are not eight?

Fool. Yes indeed. Thou wouldst make a good fool. Lear. To tak't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

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

Lear. How's that?

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

Lear. O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad! [Enter a Gentleman.]

How now? Are the horses ready? Gent. Ready, my lord.

Lear. Come, boy.

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

Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A court within the Castle of the Earl of Gloucester.

Enter [Edmund the] Bastard and Curan, meeting.

Edm. Save thee, Curan.

Cur. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his Duchess will be here with him this night.

Edm. How comes that?

Cur. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad- I mean the whisper'd ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments?

Edm. Not I. Pray you, what are they?

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

Edm. Not a word.

Cur. You may do, then, in time. Fare you well, sir. Exit. Edm. The Duke be here to-night? The better! best!

This weaves itself perforce into my business.

My father hath set guard to take my brother;

And I have one thing, of a queasy question, Which I must act.

Briefness and fortune, work! Brother, a word! Descend! Brother, I say!

Enter Edgar.

My father watches. O sir, fly this place! Intelligence is given where you are hid.

You have now the good advantage of the night.

Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall? He's coming hither; now, i' th' night, i' th' haste,

And Regan with him. Have you nothing said

Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany? Advise yourself.

Edg. I am sure on't, not a word.

Edm. I hear my father coming. Pardon me! In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.

Draw, seem to defend yourself; now quit you well.-

Yield! Come before my father. Light, ho, here! Fly, brother.-

Torches, torches!- So farewell. Exit Edgar.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion

Of my more fierce endeavour. [Stabs his arm.] I have seen drunkards

Do more than this in sport.- Father, father!- Stop, stop! No help?

Enter Gloucester, and Servants with torches.

Glou. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

Edm. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,

Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon

To stand 's auspicious mistress. Glou. But where is he?

Edm. Look, sir, I bleed.

Glou. Where is the villain, Edmund?

Edm. Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could- Glou. Pursue him, ho! Go after. [Exeunt some Servants]. By no means what?

Edm. Persuade me to the murder of your lordship; But that I told him the revenging gods

'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend; Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond The child was bound to th' father- sir, in fine, Seeing how loathly opposite I stood

To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion With his prepared sword he charges home My unprovided body, lanch'd mine arm; But when he saw my best alarum'd spirits,

Bold in the quarrel's right, rous'd to th' encounter, Or whether gasted by the noise I made,

Full suddenly he fled. Glou. Let him fly far.

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;

And found- dispatch. The noble Duke my master, My worthy arch
and patron, comes to-night.

By his authority I will proclaim it

That he which find, him shall deserve our thanks,

Bringing the murderous caitiff to the stake; He that conceals him,
death.

Edm. When I dissuaded him from his intent And found him pight to
do it, with curst speech I threaten'd to discover him. He replied,

'Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think,

If I would stand against thee, would the reposal

Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee

Make thy words faith'd? No. What I should deny (As this I would;
ay, though thou didst produce My very character), I'd turn it all

To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice; And thou must
make a dullard of the world,

If they not thought the profits of my death

Were very pregnant and potential spurs

To make thee seek it.'

Glou. Strong and fast'ned villain!

Would he deny his letter? I never got him. Tucket within.

Hark, the Duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes. All ports I'll
bar; the villain shall not scape;

The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture

I will send far and near, that all the kingdom May have due note of
him, and of my land, Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means To
make thee capable.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Attendants.

Corn. How now, my noble friend? Since I came hither (Which I can
call but now) I have heard strange news. Reg. If it be true, all
vengeance comes too short

Which can pursue th' offender. How dost, my lord? Glou. O madam, my old heart is crack'd, it's crack'd! Reg. What, did my father's godson seek your life?

He whom my father nam'd? Your Edgar? Glou. O lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

Reg. Was he not companion with the riotous knights

That tend upon my father?

Glou. I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad! Edm. Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

Reg. No marvel then though he were ill affected.

'Tis they have put him on the old man's death, To have th' expense and waste of his revenues. I have this present evening from my sister

Been well inform'd of them, and with such cautions

That, if they come to sojourn at my house, I'll not be there.

Corn. Nor I, assure thee, Regan.

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father

A childlike office.

Edm. 'Twas my duty, sir.

Glou. He did bewray his practice, and receiv'd This hurt you see,
striving to apprehend him. Corn. Is he pursued?

Glou. Ay, my good lord.

Corn. 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.

Edm. I shall serve you, sir, Truly, however else.

Glou. For him I thank your Grace.

Corn. You know not why we came to visit you- Reg. Thus out of season, threading dark-ey'd 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 best thought it fit

To answer from our home. The several messengers From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend, Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow

Your needful counsel to our business, Which craves the instant use.

Glou. I serve you, madam.

Your Graces are right welcome.

Exeunt. Flourish.

SCENE II.

Before Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Kent and [Oswald the] Steward, severally.

Osw. Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house? Kent. Ay.

Osw. Where may we set our horses? Kent. I' th' mire.

Osw. Prithee, if thou lov'st me, tell me. Kent. I love thee not.

Osw. Why then, I care not for thee.

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

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

Kent. Fellow, I know thee.

Osw. 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-liver'd, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deny the least syllable of thy addition.

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

Kent. What a brazen-fac'd varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I beat thee and tripp'd up thy heels before the King? [Draws his sword.] Draw, you rogue! for, though it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop o' th' moonshine o' you. Draw, you whoreson cullionly barbermonger!

draw!

Osw. 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!

Osw. Help, ho! murther! help!

Kent. Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue! Stand, you neat slave! Strike!
[Beats him.]

Osw. Help, ho! murther! murther!

Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn, Gloucester, Cornwall, Regan,
Servants.

Edm. How now? What's the matter? Parts [them].

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

Glou. Weapons? arms? What's the matter here? Corn. Keep peace,
upon your lives!

He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

Reg. The messengers from our sister and the King

Corn. What is your difference? Speak. Osw. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

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

Corn. Thou art a strange fellow. A tailor make a man?

Kent. Ay, a tailor, sir. A stonecutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at the trade.

Corn. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Osw. This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spar'd

At suit of his grey beard-

Kent. Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you'll give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar and daub the walls of a jakes with him. 'Spare my grey beard,' you wagtail?

Corn. Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence? Kent. Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege. Corn. Why art thou angry?

Kent. That such a slave as this should wear a sword, Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these, Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain

Which are too intrinse t' unloose; smooth every passion

That in the natures of their lords rebel,

Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods; Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks With every gale and vary of their masters, Knowing naught (like dogs) but following.

A plague upon your epileptic visage! Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool? Goose, an I had you upon Sarum Plain, I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot. Corn. What, art thou mad, old fellow? Glou. How fell you out? Say that.

Kent. No contraries hold more antipathy

Than I and such a knave.

Corn. Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault? Kent. His countenance likes me not.

Corn. No more perchance does mine, or his, or hers.

Kent. Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain. I have seen better faces in my time

Than stands on any shoulder that I see

Before me at this instant. Corn. This is some fellow

Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect

A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb

Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he!

An honest mind and plain- he must speak truth! An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.

These kind of knaves I know which in this plainness

Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends

Than twenty silly-ducking observants

That stretch their duties nicely.

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

Corn. What mean'st by this?

Kent. To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so much. I

know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that beguil'd you in a plain accent was a plain knave, which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to't.

Corn. What was th' offence you gave him? Osw. I never gave him any.

It pleas'd 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-subdu'd; 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.

Corn. Fetch forth the stocks!

You stubborn ancient knave, you reverent 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.

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

Reg. 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.

Reg. Sir, being his knave, I will.

Corn. This is a fellow of the selfsame colour

Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away the stocks! Stocks brought out.

Glou. Let me beseech your Grace not to do so. His fault is much, and the good King his master Will check him for't. Your purpos'd low correction Is such as basest and contemn'dest wretches

For pilf'rings and most common trespasses Are punish'd with. The King must take it ill That he, so slightly valued in his messenger, Should have him thus restrain'd.

Corn. I'll answer that.

Reg. My sister may receive it much more worse, To have her
gentleman abus'd, 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].

Glou. 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 watch'd 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!

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

Exit.

Kent. Good King, that must approve the common saw, Thou out of
heaven's benediction com'st

To the warm sun!

Approach, thou beacon to this under globe, That by thy
comfortable beams I may

Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles

But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia, Who hath most fortunately
been inform'd

Of my obscured course- and [reads] '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.

The open country.

Enter Edgar.

Edg. I heard myself proclaim'd, And by the happy hollow of a tree
Escap'd 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 outface

The winds and persecutions of the sky.

The country gives me proof and precedent

Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices, Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary; And with this horrible object, from low farms, Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, 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 Lear, Fool, and Gentleman.

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

Gent. As I learn'd,

The night before there was no purpose in them

Of this remove.

Kent. Hail to thee, noble master! Lear. Ha!

Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

Kent. No, my lord.

Fool. Ha, ha! look! he wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by the

head, dogs and bears by th' neck, monkeys by th' loins, and men by th' legs. When a man's over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.

Lear. What's he that hath so much thy place mistook

To set thee here?

Kent. It is both he and she- Your son and daughter. Lear. No.

Kent. Yes.

Lear. No, I say. Kent. I say yea.

Lear. No, no, they would not! Kent. Yes, they have.

Lear. By Jupiter, I swear no! Kent. By Juno, I swear ay! Lear. They durst not do't;

They would not, could 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 perceiv'd had poison'd mine-

Being the very fellow which of late Display'd so saucily against
your Highness- Having more man than wit about me, drew.

He rais'd 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. Fortune, that arrant whore, Ne'er turns the key to th' poor.

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

Lear. O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! Hysterica passio! Down, thou climbing sorrow!

Thy element's below! Where is this daughter?

Kent. With the Earl, sir, here within. Lear. Follow me not;

Stay here. Exit.

Gent. Made you no more offence but what you speak of? Kent.

None.

How chance the King comes with so small a number?

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

Kent. Why, fool?

Fool. We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no labouring i' th' winter. All that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following

it; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again. I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir which serves and seeks for gain, And follows but for form,
Will pack when it begins to rain

And leave thee in the storm.

But I will tarry; the fool will stay, And let the wise man fly.

The knave turns fool that runs away;

The fool no knave, perdy.

Kent. Where learn'd you this, fool? Fool. Not i' th' stocks, fool.

Enter Lear and Gloucester

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. Glou. My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality of the Duke, How unremovable and fix'd he is

In his own course.

Lear. Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!

Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester, I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife. Glou. Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so. Lear. Inform'd them? Dost thou understand me, man? Glou. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. The King would speak with Cornwall; the dear father

Would with his daughter speak, commands her service. Are they
inform'd of this? My breath and blood!

Fiery? the fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that- No, but not yet! May
be he is not well. Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound. We are not ourselves When nature,
being oppress'd, commands the mind To suffer with the body. I'll
forbear;

And am fallen out with my more headier will, To take the
indispos'd and sickly fit

For the sound man.- Death on my state! Wherefore

Should he sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the Duke and her

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.

Go tell the Duke and 's wife I'd speak with them- Now, presently.

Bid them come forth and hear me, Or at their chamber door I'll
beat the drum

Till it cry sleep to death.

Glou. I would have all well betwixt you. Exit. Lear. O me, my heart,
my rising heart! But down!

Fool. Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put
'em i' th' paste alive. She knapp'd 'em o' th' coxcombs with
a stick and cried 'Down, wantons, down!' 'Twas her brother that,

in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay. Enter Cornwall,
Regan, Gloucester, Servants. Lear. Good morrow to you both.

Corn. Hail to your Grace! Kent here set at liberty.

Reg. I am glad to see your Highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are; I know what reason

I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me
from thy mother's tomb, Sepulchring an adultress. [To Kent] O, are
you free? Some other time for that.- Beloved Regan,

Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied Sharp-tooth'd
unkindness, like a vulture, here! [Lays his hand on his heart.]

I can scarce speak to thee. Thou'lt not believe

With how depriv'd a quality- O Regan!

Reg. I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope

You less know how to value her desert

Than she to scant her duty. Lear. Say, how is that?

Reg. 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.

Lear. My curses on her! Reg. O, sir, you are old!

Nature in you stands on the very verge

Of her confine. You should be rul'd, 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. Lear. Ask her forgiveness?

Do you but mark how this becomes the house:

'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old. [Kneels.] Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg

That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.' Reg. Good sir, no more! These are unsightly tricks. Return you to my sister.

Lear. [rises] 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 stor'd vengeance of heaven fall

On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones, You taking airs, with lameness!

Corn. Fie, sir, fie!

Lear. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames

Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,

You fen-suck'd fogs, drawn by the pow'rful sun, To fall and blast
her pride!

Reg. O the blest gods! so will you wish on me

When the rash mood is on.

Lear. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse. Thy tender-
hefted nature shall not give

Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce; but thine

Do comfort, and not burn. 'Tis not in thee

To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train, To bandy hasty
words, to scant my sizes, And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt
Against my coming in. Thou better know'st The offices of nature,
bond of childhood, Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude.

Thy half o' th' kingdom hast thou not forgot, Wherein I thee
endow'd.

Reg. Good sir, to th' purpose. Tucket within.

Lear. Who put my man i' th' stocks?

Corn. What trumpet's that?

Reg. I know't- my sister's. This approves her letter,

That she would soon be here. Enter [Oswald the] Steward. Is your lady come?

Lear. This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride

Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows. Out, varlet, from my sight!

Corn. What means your Grace?

Enter Goneril.

Lear. Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope Thou didst not know on't.- Who comes here? O heavens! If you do love old men, if your sweet sway

Allow obedience- if yourselves are old,

Make it your cause! Send down, and take my part!

[To Goneril] Art not asham'd to look upon this beard?- O Regan,
wilt thou take her by the hand?

Gon. Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended?

All's not offence that indiscretion finds

And dotage terms so.

Lear. O sides, you are too tough!

Will you yet hold? How came my man i' th' stocks? Corn. I set him
there, sir; but his own disorders Deserv'd much less advancement.

Lear. You? Did you?

Reg. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. If, till the expiration
of your month,

You will return and sojourn with my sister, Dismissing half your
train, come then to me.

I am now from home, and out of that provision Which shall be
needful for your entertainment. Lear. Return to her, and fifty men
dismiss'd? No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose

To wage against the enmity o' th' air,

To be a comrade with the wolf and owl- Necessity's sharp pinch!
Return with her?

Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took

Our youngest born, I could as well be brought

To knee his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg To keep base life
afoot. Return with her? Persuade me rather to be slave and
sumpter

To this detested groom. [Points at Oswald.] Gon. At your choice,
sir.

Lear. I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad. I will not trouble
thee, my child; farewell.

We'll no more meet, no more see one another.

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter; Or rather a
disease that's in my flesh,

Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil, A plague sore, 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. Reg. Not altogether so.

I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided

For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister; For those that
mingle reason with your passion Must be content to think you old,
and so-

But she knows what she does. Lear. Is this well spoken?

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

Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house

Should many people, under two commands, Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

Gon. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance

From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

Reg. Why not, my lord? If then they chanc'd to slack ye, We could control them. If you will come to me

(For now I spy a danger), I entreat you

To bring but five-and-twenty. To no more

Will I give place or notice. Lear. I gave you all-

Reg. And in good time you gave it!

Lear. Made you my guardians, my depositaries; But kept a reservation to be followed

With such a number. What, must I come to you

With five-and-twenty, Regan? Said you so?

Reg. And speak't again my lord. No more with me. Lear. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd When others are more wicked; not being the worst

Stands in some rank of praise. [To Goneril] I'll go with thee. Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,

And thou art twice her love. Gon. 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?

Reg. What need one?

Lear. O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars

Are in the poorest thing superfluous. Allow not nature more than nature needs, Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady: If only to go warm were gorgeous,

Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st Which scarcely
keeps thee warm. But, for true need- You heavens, give me that
patience, patience I need! You see me here, you gods, a poor old
man,

As full of grief as age; wretched in both.

If it be you that stirs 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 Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool. Storm and tempest.

Corn. Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

Reg. This house is little; the old man and 's people

Cannot be well bestow'd.

Gon. 'Tis his own blame; hath put himself from rest

And must needs taste his folly.

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

Gon. So am I purpos'd.

Where is my Lord of Gloucester? Corn. Followed the old man forth.

Enter Gloucester.

He is return'd.

Glou. The King is in high rage. Corn. Whither is he going?

Glou. He calls to horse, but will I know not whither. Corn. 'Tis best to give him way; he leads himself. Gon. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

Glou. Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds
Do sorely ruffle. For many miles about

There's scarce a bush. Reg. O, sir, to wilful men
The injuries that they themselves procure

Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors. He is attended
with a desperate train,

And what they may incense him to, being apt

To have his ear abus'd, wisdom bids fear.

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

Exeunt.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A heath.

Storm still. Enter Kent and a Gentleman at several doors. Kent.
Who's there, besides foul weather?

Gent. One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

Kent. I know you. Where's the King?

Gent. Contending with the fretful elements; Bids the wind blow the
earth into the sea, Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,

That things might change or cease; tears his white hair, Which the
impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,

Catch in their fury and make nothing of; Strives in his little world of
man to outscorn The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.

This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,

The lion and the belly-pinched wolf Keep their fur dry, unbonneted
he runs, And bids what will take all.

Kent. But who is with him?

Gent. None but the fool, who labours to outjest

His heart-struck injuries. Kent. Sir, I do know you,

And dare upon the warrant of my note Commend a dear thing to
you. There is division (Although as yet the face of it be cover'd

With mutual cunning) 'twixt Albany and Cornwall; Who have (as
who have not, that their great stars Thron'd and set high?)

servants, who seem no less, Which are to France the spies and
speculations Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,

Either in snuffs and packings of the Dukes,

Or the hard rein which both of them have borne Against the old
kind King, or something deeper, Whereof, perchance, these are but
furnishings- But, true it is, from France there comes a power Into
this scattered kingdom, who already,

Wise in our negligence, have secret feet In some of our best ports
and are at point To show their open banner. Now to you: If on my
credit you dare build so far

To make your speed to Dover, you shall find

Some that will thank you, making just report

Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow

The King hath cause to plain.

I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,

And from some knowledge and assurance offer

This office to you.

Gent. I will talk further with you. Kent. No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more

Than my out-wall, open this purse and take

What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia

(As fear not but you shall), show her this ring, And she will tell you
who your fellow is

That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!

I will go seek the King.

Gent. Give me your hand. Have you no more to say? Kent. Few
words, but, to effect, more than all yet:

That, when we have found the King (in which your pain

That way, I'll this), he that first lights on him

Holla the other.

Exeunt [severally].

SCENE II.

Another part of the heath.

Storm still.

Enter Lear and Fool.

Lear. Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! You
cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! You
sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,

Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,

Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Strike flat the
thick rotundity o' th' world,

Crack Nature's moulds, all germains spill at once,

That makes ingrateful man!

Fool. O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better than this
rain water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters
blessing! Here's a night pities nether wise men nor fools.

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 despis'd old man.

But yet I call you servile ministers,

That will with two pernicious daughters join Your high-engender'd
battles 'gainst a head So old and white as this! O! O! 'tis foul!

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

The codpiece that will house

Before the head has any,

The head and he shall louse: So beggars marry many.

The man that makes his toe

What he his heart should make

Shall of a corn cry woe, And turn his sleep to wake.

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

Enter Kent.

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

Kent. Who's there?

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

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

Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies

Gallow the very wanderers of the dark

And make them keep their caves. Since I was man, Such sheets of
fire, such bursts of horrid thunder, Such groans of roaring wind
and rain, I never Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot
carry Th' affliction nor the fear.

Lear. Let the great gods,

That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,

Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch, That hast within
thee undivulged crimes

Unwhipp'd of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand;

Thou perjur'd, and thou simular man of virtue That art incestuous.
Caitiff, in pieces shake That under covert and convenient seeming

Hast practis'd on man's life. Close pent-up guilts, Rive your
concealing continents, and cry

These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man

More sinn'd against than sinning. Kent. Alack, bareheaded?

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;

Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest. Repose you there, whilst I to this hard house

(More harder than the stones whereof 'tis rais'd,

Which even but now, demanding after you, Denied me to come in) return, and force Their scant'd courtesy.

Lear. My wits begin to turn.

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?

I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow? The art of our necessities is strange,

That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel. Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart

That's sorry yet for thee. Fool. [sings]

He that has and a little tiny wit- With hey, ho, the wind and the rain- Must make content with his fortunes fit, For the rain it raineth every day.

Lear. True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel. Exeunt
[Lear and Kent].

Fool. This is a brave night to cool a courtesan. I'll speak a

prophecy ere I go:

When priests are more in word than matter; When brewers mar
their malt with water; When nobles are their tailors' tutors,

No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors; When every case in law is
right,

No squire in debt nor no poor knight; When slanders do not live in
tongues, Nor cutpurses come not to throngs; When usurers tell
their gold i' th' field,

And bawds and whores do churches build: Then shall the realm of
Albion

Come to great confusion.

Then comes the time, who lives to see't, That going shall be us'd
with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time.

Exit.

SCENE III.

Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Gloucester and Edmund.

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

Edm. Most savage and unnatural!

Glou. Go to; say you nothing. There is division betwixt the Dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have received a letter this night- 'tis dangerous to be spoken- I have lock'd 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't, as no less is threat'ned me, the King my old master must be

relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund. Pray you be careful. Exit.

Edm. 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.

Storm still.

Enter 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.

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here. Lear. Wilt break my heart?

Kent. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter. Lear.
Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm Invades us to
the skin. So 'tis to thee;

But where the greater malady is fix'd,

The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear; But if thy flight lay
toward the raging sea,

Thou'dst meet the bear i' th' mouth. 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.

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.

Exit [Fool].

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are, That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,

How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en

Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp; Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, That thou mayst shake the superflux to them And show the heavens more just.

Edg. [within] Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom! Enter Fool [from the hovel].

Fool. Come not in here, nuncle, here's a spirit. Help me, help me!
Kent. Give me thy hand. Who's there?

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

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

Enter Edgar [disguised as a madman].

Edg. Away! the foul fiend follows me! Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. Humh! go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

Lear. Hast thou given all to thy two daughters, and art thou come

to this? Edg. Who gives anything to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pew, set ratsbane by his porridge, made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting horse over four-inch'd bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom 's acold. O, do de, do de, do

de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now- and there- and there again- and there! Storm still. Lear. What, have his daughters brought him to this pass? Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give 'em all? Fool. Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all sham'd. Lear. Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters! Kent. He hath no daughters, sir. Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdu'd nature To such a lowness but his

unkind daughters. Is it the fashion that discarded fathers Should have thus little mercy on their flesh? Judicious punishment! 'Twas this flesh begot Those pelican daughters. Edg. Pillicock sat on Pillicock's Hill. 'Allow, 'allow, loo, loo! Fool. This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen. Edg. Take heed o' th' foul fiend; obey thy parents: keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom 's acold. Lear. What hast thou been? Edg. A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curl'd my hair, wore gloves in my cap; serv'd the lust of my mistress' heart and did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of heaven; one that slept in the contriving of lust, and wak'd to do it. Wine lov'd I deeply, dice dearly; and in woman out-paramour'd the Turk. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman. Keep thy foot out of brothel, thy hand out of placket, thy pen from lender's book, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind; says suum, mun, hey, no, nonny. Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by. Storm still. Lear. Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself;

unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here. [Tears at 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.

Edg. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet. He begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock. He gives the web and the pin, squints the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

Saint Withold footed thrice the 'old;

He met the nightmare, and her nine fold; Bid her alight

And her troth plight,

And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee! Kent. How fares your Grace?

Lear. What's he?

Kent. Who's there? What is't you seek? Glou. What are you there?
Your names?

Edg. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the todpole,

the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the
foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets, swallows the old rat
and the ditch-dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool;
who is whipp'd from tithing to tithing, and

stock-punish'd and imprison'd; who hath had three suits to his
back, six shirts to his body, horse to ride, and weapons to wear;

But mice and rats, and such small deer, Have been Tom's food for
seven long year.

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

What, hath your Grace no better company?

Edg. The prince of darkness is a gentleman!

Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.

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

Edg. Poor Tom 's acold.

Glou. Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer

T' obey in all your daughters' hard commands. Though their
injunction be to bar my doors

And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you, Yet have I
ventur'd to come seek you out

And bring you where both fire and food is ready. Lear. First let me
talk with this philosopher.

What is the cause of thunder?

Kent. Good my lord, take his offer; go into th' house. Lear. I'll talk a
word with this same learned Theban. What is your study?

Edg. How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin. Lear. Let me ask
you one word in private.

Kent. Importune him once more to go, my lord.

His wits begin t' unsettle. Glou. 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 lov'd him, friend- No father his son dearer.

True to tell thee,

The grief hath craz'd my wits. What a night 's this! I do beseech
your Grace-

Lear. O, cry you mercy, sir.

Noble philosopher, your company.

Edg. Tom's acold.

Glou. In, fellow, there, into th' hovel; keep thee warm. Lear. Come,
let's in all.

Kent. This way, my lord.

Lear. With him!

I will keep still with my philosopher.

Kent. Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the fellow. Glou. Take him you on.

Kent. Sirrah, come on; go along with us. Lear. Come, good Athenian.

Glou. No words, no words! hush.

Edg. 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.

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

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

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

Edm. 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!

Corn. Go with me to the Duchess.

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

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

Edm. [aside] If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully.- I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

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

Exeunt.

SCENE VI.

A farmhouse near Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Gloucester, Lear, Kent, Fool, and Edgar.

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

Kent. All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience.

The gods reward your kindness! Exit [Gloucester].

Edg. Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the

lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

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

Lear. A king, a king!

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

Lear. To have a thousand with red burning spits

Come hissing in upon 'em-

Edg. The foul fiend bites my back.

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

Lear. It shall be done; I will arraign them straight.

[To Edgar] Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer. [To the Fool]
Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you
she-foxes!

Edg. Look, where he stands and glares! Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?

Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.

Fool. Her boat hath a leak, And she must not speak

Why she dares not come over to thee.

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

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

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

[To Edgar] Thou, robed man of justice, take thy place. [To the
Fool] And thou, his yokefellow of equity,

Bench by his side. [To Kent] You are o' th' commission, Sit you too.

Edg. Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd? Thy sheep be in the corn;
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth

Thy sheep shall take no harm. Purr! the cat is gray.

Lear. Arraign her first. 'Tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor King her father. Fool. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear. She cannot deny it.

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

Lear. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim

What store her heart is made on. Stop her there! Arms, arms! sword! fire! Corruption in the place! False justicer, why hast thou let her scape?

Edg. Bless thy five wits!

Kent. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now

That you so oft have boasted to retain?

Edg. [aside] My tears begin to take his part so much

They'll mar my counterfeiting. Lear. The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.

Edg. Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs! Be thy
mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite;

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim, Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,
Bobtail tyke or trundle-tail-

Tom will make them weep and wail; For, with throwing thus my
head, Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market
towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

Lear. Then let them anatomize Regan. See what breeds about her
heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard

hearts? [To Edgar] You, sir- I entertain you for one of my hundred;
only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You'll say they are
Persian attire; but let them be chang'd.

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

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains. So, so, so.
We'll go to supper i' th' morning. So, so, so. Fool. And I'll go to bed
at noon.

Enter Gloucester.

Glou. Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master? Kent.
Here, sir; but trouble him not; his wits are gone. Glou. 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. Take up, take up! And follow me, that will to
some provision Give thee quick conduct.

Kent. Oppressed nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses, Which, if
convenience will not allow,

Stand in hard cure. [To the Fool] Come, help to bear thy

master.

Thou must not stay behind. Glou. Come, come, away! Exeunt [all but Edgar].

Edg. When we our betters see bearing our woes, We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind, Leaving free things and happy shows behind;

But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip

When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship. How light and portable my pain seems now,

When that which makes me bend makes the King bow,

He childed as I fathered! Tom, away! Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray

When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,

In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.

What will hap more to-night, safe scape the King! Lurk, lurk.

[Exit.]

Scene VII. Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, [Edmund the] Bastard, and

Servants.

Corn. [to Goneril] Post speedily to my lord your husband, show him this letter. The army of France is landed.- Seek out the traitor Gloucester.

[Exeunt some of the Servants.] Reg. Hang him instantly.

Gon. Pluck out his eyes.

Corn. 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 the] Steward.

How now? Where's the King?

Osw. My Lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence. Some five or six and thirty of his knights,

Hot questrists after him, met him at gate;

Who, with some other of the lord's dependants,

Are gone with him towards Dover, where they boast

To have well-armed friends.

Corn. Get horses for your mistress. Gon. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister. Corn. Edmund, farewell.

Exeunt Goneril, [Edmund, and Oswald].

Go seek the traitor Gloucester

Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us. [Exeunt other Servants.]

Though well we may not pass upon his life

Without the form of justice, yet our power Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men May blame, but not control.

Enter Gloucester, brought in by two or three. Who's there? the traitor?

Reg. Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

Corn. Bind fast his corky arms.

Glou. What mean, your Graces? Good my friends, consider

You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends. Corn. Bind him, I say.

[Servants bind him.]

Reg. Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

Glou. Unmerciful lady as you are, I am none.

Corn. To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find- [Regan plucks his beard.]

Glou. By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done

To pluck me by the beard.

Reg. So white, and such a traitor! Glou. Naughty lady,

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin Will quicken, and accuse thee. I am your host. With robber's hands my hospitable favours

You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

Corn. Come, sir, what letters had you late from France? Reg. Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.

Corn. And what confederacy have you with the traitors

Late footed in the kingdom?

Reg. To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King? Speak.

Glou. I have a letter guessingly set down,

Which came from one that's of a neutral heart, And not from one
oppos'd.

Corn. Cunning.

Reg. And false.

Corn. Where hast thou sent the King? Glou. To Dover.

Reg. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charg'd at peril- Corn.

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that. Glou. I am tied to
th' stake, and I must stand the course. Reg. Wherefore to Dover,
sir?

Glou. 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.

The sea, with such a storm as his bare head

In hell-black night endur'd, would have buoy'd up

And quench'd the steeled fires.

Yet, poor old heart, he holp the heavens to rain. If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time, Thou shouldst have said, 'Good porter, turn the key.' All cruels else subscrib'd. But I shall see
The winged vengeance overtake such children. Corn. See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair. Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

Glou. He that will think to live till he be old, Give me some help!- O cruel! O ye gods!

Reg. One side will mock another. Th' other too! Corn. If you see vengeance-

1. Serv. Hold your hand, my lord!

I have serv'd you ever since I was a child; But better service have I never done you Than now to bid you hold.

Reg. How now, you dog?

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

Reg. What do you mean?

Corn. My villain! Draw and fight.

1. Serv. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger. Reg.
Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?

She takes a sword and runs at him behind.

1. Serv. O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left

To see some mischief on him. O! He dies.

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

Glou. All dark and comfortless! Where's my son Edmund? Edmund,
enkindle all the sparks of nature

To quit this horrid act.

Reg. 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.

Glou. O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd. Kind gods, forgive me
that, and prosper him!

Reg. 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?

Corn. I have receiv'd 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].

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

3. Serv. If she live long,

And in the end meet the old course of death, Women will all turn monsters.

2. Serv. Let's follow the old Earl, and get the bedlam To lead him where he would. His roguish madness Allows itself to anything.

3. Serv. Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs

To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

Exeunt.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The heath.

Enter Edgar.

Edg. Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd, Than still
contemn'd and flatter'd. To be worst, The lowest and most
dejected thing of fortune, Stands still in esperance, lives not in
fear.

The lamentable change is from the best;

The worst returns to laughter. Welcome then, Thou unsubstantial
air that I embrace!

The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst

Owes nothing to thy blasts.

Enter Gloucester, led by an Old Man. But who comes here?

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

But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee, Life would not yield to age.

Old Man. O my good lord,

I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant, These fourscore years.

Glou. Away, get thee away! Good friend, be gone.

Thy comforts can do me no good at all; Thee they may hurt.

Old Man. You cannot see your way.

Glou. 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. Ah dear son Edgar,

The food of thy abused father's wrath! Might I but live to see thee in my touch, I'd say I had eyes again!

Old Man. How now? Who's there?

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

Old Man. 'Tis poor mad Tom.

Edg. [aside] And worse I may be yet. The worst is not

So long as we can say 'This is the worst.' Old Man. Fellow, where goest?

Glou. Is it a beggarman?

Old Man. Madman and beggar too.

Glou. He has some reason, else he could not beg. I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw,

Which made me think a man a worm. My son

Came then into my mind, and yet my mind

Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard more since. As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods.

They kill us for their sport.

Edg. [aside] How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow, Ang'ring itself and others.- Bless thee, master! Glou. Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man. Ay, my lord.

Glou. Then prithee get thee gone. If for my sake

Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain

I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;

And bring some covering for this naked soul, Who I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man. Alack, sir, he is mad!

Glou. 'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind. Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure.

Above the rest, be gone.

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

Glou. Sirrah naked fellow-

Edg. Poor Tom's acold. [Aside] I cannot daub it further. Glou. Come hither, fellow.

Edg. [aside] And yet I must.- Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed. Glou. Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edg. Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath. Poor Tom hath been scar'd out of his good wits. Bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once: of

lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting women. So,

bless thee, master!

Glou. Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues

Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still! Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,

That slaves your ordinance, that will not see Because he does not feel, feel your pow'r quickly; So distribution should undo excess, And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover? Edg. Ay, master.

Glou. 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. Edg. Give me thy arm. Poor Tom shall lead thee.

Exeunt.

SCENE II.

Before the Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter Goneril and [Edmund the] Bastard.

Gon. Welcome, my lord. I marvel our mild husband

Not met us on the way.

Enter [Oswald the] Steward. Now, where's your master?

Osw. Madam, within, but never man so chang'd.

I told him of the army that was landed:

He smil'd 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.

Gon. [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 pow'rs.

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. [Gives a favour.] Spare speech.

Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,

Would stretch thy spirits up into the air. Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edm. Yours in the ranks of death! Exit.

Gon. My most dear Gloucester!

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

Osw. Madam, here comes my lord. Exit. Enter Albany.

Gon. I have been worth the whistle. Alb. O Goneril,

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind

Blows in your face! I fear your disposition. That nature which contemns its origin

Cannot be bordered certain in itself.

She that herself will sliver and disbranch From her material sap, perforce must wither And come to deadly use.

Gon. No more! The text is foolish.

Alb. 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.

Gon. 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 state begins to threat, Whiles thou, a moral
fool, sit'st still, and criest

'Alack, why does he so?' Alb. See thyself, devil!

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend

So horrid as in woman. Gon. O vain fool!

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

To let these hands obey my blood,

They are apt enough to dislocate and tear

Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend, A woman's shape
doth shield thee.

Gon. Marry, your manhood mew! Enter a Gentleman.

Alb. What news?

Gent. O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall 's dead, Slain by his
servant, going to put out

The other eye of Gloucester. Alb. Gloucester's eyes?

Gent. A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,

Oppos'd against the act, bending his sword

To his great master; who, thereat enrag'd,

Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead; But not without
that harmful stroke which since Hath pluck'd him after.

Alb. This shows you are above,

You justicers, that these our nether crimes

So speedily can venge! But O poor Gloucester!

Lose he his other eye? Gent. Both, both, my lord.

This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer.

'Tis from your sister.

Gon. [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.

Alb. Where was his son when they did take his eyes? Gent. Come
with my lady hither.

Alb. He is not here.

Gent. No, my good lord; I met him back again. Alb. Knows he the
wickedness?

Gent. Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he inform'd against him,

And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment

Might have the freer course. Alb. 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 III.

The French camp near Dover.

Enter Kent and a Gentleman.

Kent. Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back know you the reason?

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

Kent. Who hath he left behind him general? Gent. The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

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

Gent. Ay, sir. She took them, read them in my presence, And now and then an ample tear trill'd down Her delicate cheek. It seem'd she was a queen Over her passion, who, most rebel-like, Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent. O, then it mov'd her?

Gent. Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove Who should
express her goodliest. You have seen Sunshine and rain at once:
her smiles and tears Were like, a better way. Those happy smilets
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know What guests were in
her eyes, which parted thence As pearls from diamonds dropp'd.
In brief,

Sorrow would be a rarity most belov'd, If all could so become it.

Kent. Made she no verbal question?

Gent. Faith, once or twice she heav'd the name of father

Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;

Cried 'Sisters, sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters! Kent! father! sisters!
What, i' th' storm? i' th' night? Let pity not be believ'd! There she
shook

The holy water from her heavenly eyes,

And clamour moisten'd. Then away she started

To deal with grief alone. Kent. It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our conditions; Else one self mate and
mate could not beget
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?

Gent. No.

Kent. Was this before the King return'd? Gent. No, since.

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

Will yield to see his daughter. Gent. Why, good sir?

Kent. A sovereign shame so elbows him; his own unkindness,

That stripp'd her from his benediction, turn'd her

To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights

To his dog-hearted daughters- these things sting His mind so
venomously that burning shame Detains him from Cordelia.

Gent. Alack, poor gentleman!

Kent. Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not? Gent. 'Tis
so; they are afoot.

Kent. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear And leave you to
attend him. Some dear cause Will in concealment wrap me up
awhile.

When I am known aright, you shall not grieve Lending me this
acquaintance. I pray you go Along with me.

Exeunt.

SCENE IV.

The French camp.

Enter, with Drum and Colours, Cordelia, Doctor, and Soldiers.

Cor. 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 harlocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flow'rs, 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.] What can man's wisdom

In the restoring his bereaved sense?

He that helps him take all my outward worth. Doct. There is means, madam.

Our foster nurse of nature is repose,

The which he lacks. That to provoke in him Are many simples
operative, whose power Will close the eye of anguish.

Cor. 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 Messenger.

Mess. News, madam.

The British pow'rs are marching hitherward. Cor. '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 ag'd father's right. Soon may I hear
and see him!

Exeunt.

SCENE V.

Gloucester's Castle.

Enter Regan and [Oswald the] Steward. Reg. But are my brother's pow'rs set forth? Osw. Ay, madam.

Reg. Himself in person there? Osw. Madam, with much ado. Your sister is the better soldier.

Reg. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home? Osw. No, madam.

Reg. What might import my sister's letter to him? Osw. I know not, lady.

Reg. Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out, To let him live.
Where he arrives he moves

All hearts against us. Edmund, I think, is gone, In pity of his
misery, to dispatch

His nighted life; moreover, to descry

The strength o' th' enemy.

Osw. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter. Reg. Our troops set forth to-morrow. Stay with us. The ways are dangerous.

Osw. I may not, madam.

My lady charg'd my duty in this business.

Reg. 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.

Osw. Madam, I had rather-

Reg. I know your lady does not love her husband; I am sure of that; and at her late being here

She gave strange eyeliads and most speaking looks

To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom. Osw. I, madam?

Reg. I speak in understanding. Y'are! I know't.

Therefore I do advise you take this note. My lord is dead; Edmund
and I have 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 farewell.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor, Preferment falls on
him that cuts him off.

Osw. Would I could meet him, madam! I should show

What party I do follow. Reg. Fare thee well.

Exeunt.

SCENE VI.

The country near Dover.

Enter Gloucester, and Edgar [like a Peasant]. Glou. When shall I come to th' top of that same hill? Edg. You do climb up it now.

Look how we labour. Glou. Methinks the ground is even.

Edg. Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea? Glou. No, truly.

Edg. Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect

By your eyes' anguish. Glou. So may it be indeed.

Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st

In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

Edg. Y'are much deceiv'd. In nothing am I chang'd

But in my garments.

Glou. Methinks y'are better spoken.

Edg. Come on, sir; here's the place. Stand still. How fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down Hangs one that gathers sampire-dreadful trade! Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.

The fishermen that walk upon the beach

Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark, Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy

Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge

That on th' unnumb'ed idle pebble chafes Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more, Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight Topple down headlong.

Glou. Set me where you stand.

Edg. Give me your hand. You are now within a foot Of th' extreme verge. For all beneath the moon Would I not leap upright.

Glou. Let go my hand.

Here, friend, is another purse; in it a jewel

Well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies and gods

Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;

Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going. Edg. Now fare ye well, good sir.

Glou. With all my heart.

Edg. [aside]. Why I do trifle thus with his despair

Is done to cure it.

Glou. O you mighty gods! He kneels.

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 and swoons]. Edg. Gone, sir, farewell.-

And yet I know not how conceit may rob

The treasury of life when life itself

Yields to the theft. Had he been where he thought, By this had
thought been past.- Alive or dead?

Ho you, sir! friend! Hear you, sir? Speak!- Thus might he pass
indeed. Yet he revives. What are you, sir?

Glou. Away, and let me die.

Edg. 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 is a miracle. Speak yet again.

Glou. But have I fall'n, or no?

Edg. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn. Look up a-height. The shrill-gorg'd lark so far Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.

Glou. Alack, I have no eyes!

Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit

To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage And frustrate his proud will.

Edg. Give me your arm.

Up- so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand. Glou. Too well, too well.

Edg. This is above all strangeness.

Upon the crown o' th' cliff what thing was that

Which parted from you?

Glou. A poor unfortunate beggar.

Edg. As I stood here below, methought his eyes
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelk'd and wav'd like the
enridged sea. It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father,

Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours

Of men's impossibility, have preserv'd thee. Glou. 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.

Edg. Bear free and patient thoughts.

Enter Lear, mad, [fantastically dressed with weeds]. But who
comes here?

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate

His master thus.

Lear. No, they cannot touch me for coming; I am the King himself.

Edg. O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear. Nature 's above art in that respect. There's your press

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

Edg. Sweet marjoram. Lear. Pass.

Glou. I know that voice.

Lear. Ha! Goneril with a white beard? They flatter'd me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything I said! 'Ay' and

'no' too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once,
and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not
peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em
out. Go to, they are not men o' their words! They told me I was
everything. 'Tis a lie- I am not ague-proof.

Glou. The trick of that voice I do well remember. Is't not the King?

Lear. Ay, every inch a king!

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause? Adultery?

Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No. The wren goes to't, and
the small gilded fly Does lecher in my sight.

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son

Was kinder to his father than my daughters

Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

To't, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers. Behold yond simp'ring
dame,

Whose face between her forks presageth snow,

That minces virtue, and does shake the head

To hear of pleasure's name.

The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't

With a more riotous appetite.

Down from the waist they are Centaurs, Though women all above.

But to the girdle do the gods inherit, Beneath is all the fiend's.

There's hell, there's darkness, there'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.

Glou. O, let me kiss that hand!

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

Glou. O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world

Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?

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

Glou. Were all the letters suns, I could not see one. Edg. [aside] I
would not take this from report. It is, And my heart breaks at it.

Lear. Read.

Glou. What, with the case of eyes?

Lear. O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no
money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse

in a light. Yet you see how this world goes. Glou. I see it feelingly.

Lear. What, art mad? A man may see how the 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? Glou. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst behold

the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office. Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

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

Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind

For which thou whip'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 pygmy's straw does pierce it. None does offend, none- I say none! I'll able 'em. Take that of me, my friend, who have the power To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes

And, like a scurvy politician, seem

To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now! Pull off my boots. Harder, harder! So.

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

Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

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

Alack, alack the day!

Lear. When we are born, we cry that we are come

To this great stage of fools. This' a good block. It were a delicate stratagem to shoe

A troop of horse with felt. I'll put't in proof,

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

Enter a Gentleman [with Attendants].

Gent. O, here he is! Lay hand upon him.- Sir, Your most dear daughter-

Lear. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even

The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;

You shall have ransom. Let me have a surgeon; I am cut to th' brains.

Gent. You shall have anything. Lear. No seconds? All myself?

Why, this would make a man a man of salt,

To use his eyes for garden waterpots, Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

Gent. Good sir-

Lear. I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom. What! I will be jovial. Come, come, I am a king;

My masters, know you that?

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

Lear. Then there's life in't. Nay, an you get it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa!

Exit running. [Attendants follow.]

Gent. 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. Edg. Hail, gentle sir.

Gent. Sir, speed you. What's your will?

Edg. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward? Gent. Most sure and vulgar. Every one hears that Which can distinguish sound.

Edg. But, by your favour,

How near's the other army?

Gent. Near and on speedy foot. The main descry

Stands on the hourly thought. Edg. I thank you sir. That's all.

Gent. Though that the Queen on special cause is here, Her army is mov'd on.

Edg. I thank you, sir

Exit [Gentleman].

Glou. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me; Let not my
worser spirit tempt me again

To die before you please! Edg. Well pray you, father.

Glou. Now, good sir, what are you?

Edg. 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. Glou. Hearty thanks.

The bounty and the benison of heaven

To boot, and boot!

Enter [Oswald the] Steward

Osw. A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!

That eyeless head of thine was first fram'd flesh To raise my
fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor, Briefly thyself remember. The
sword is out

That must destroy thee.

Glou. Now let thy friendly hand

Put strength enough to't. [Edgar interposes.]

Osw. Wherefore, bold peasant,

Dar'st thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence! Lest that th'
infection of his fortune take

Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

Edg. Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'cagion. Osw. Let go, slave,
or thou diest!

Edg. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor voke pass. An
chud ha' bin zwagger'd 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 vore ye, or Ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder. Chill be plain with you. Osw. Out, dunghill!

They fight.

Edg. Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come! No matter vor your foins.

[Oswald falls.]

Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse. If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,

And give the letters which thou find'st about me

To Edmund Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out Upon the British party. O, untimely death! Death! He dies.

Edg. I know thee well. A serviceable villain, As duteous to the vices of thy mistress

As badness would desire.

Glou. What, is he dead?

Edg. Sit you down, father; rest you.

Let's see his pockets; these letters that he speaks of

May be my friends. He's dead. I am only sorry

He had no other deathsman. 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 the letter.

'Let our reciprocal vows be rememb'red. You have many

opportunities to cut him off. If your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offer'd. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror. Then am I the prisoner, and his bed my

jail; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.

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

'Goneril.'

O indistinguish'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-practis'd Duke, For him 'tis well

That of thy death and business I can tell.

Glou. The King is mad. How stiff is my vile sense, That I stand up,
and have ingenious feeling

Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.

So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs, And woes by
wrong imaginations lose

The knowledge of themselves. A drum afar off.

Edg. Give me your hand.

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.

Enter Cordelia, Kent, Doctor, and Gentleman. Cor. 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 acknowledg'd, madam, is o'erpaid. All my reports go with the modest truth;

Nor more nor clipp'd, but so. Cor. Be better suited.

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

Kent. Pardon, dear madam.

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

Cor. Then be't so, my good lord. [To the Doctor] How, does the King? Doct. Madam, sleeps still.

Cor. O you kind gods,

Cure this great breach in his abused nature! Th' untun'd and jarring senses, O, wind up

Of this child-changed father! Doct. So please your Majesty

That we may wake the King? He hath slept long. Cor. Be govern'd
by your knowledge, and proceed I' th' sway of your own will. Is he
array'd?

Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants. Gent. Ay, madam. In the
heaviness of sleep We put fresh garments on him.

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

Cor. Very well. Music.

Doct. Please you draw near. Louder the music there!

Cor. 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!

Cor. Had you not been their father, these white flakes

Had challeng'd pity of them. Was this a face

To be oppos'd 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. Doct. Madam, do
you; 'tis fittest.

Cor. How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty? Lear. You
do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave.

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

Cor. Sir, do you know me?

Lear. You are a spirit, I know. When did you die? Cor. Still, still, far wide!

Doct. He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.

Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight, I am mightily abus'd. I should e'en die with pity,

To see another thus. I know not what to say.

I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see. I feel this pin prick.

Would I were assur'd

Of my condition!

Cor. O, look upon me, sir,

And hold your hands in benediction o'er me. No, sir, you must not kneel.

Lear. Pray, do not mock me.

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less; And, to deal plainly,

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks I should know you, and know this man; Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant

What place this is; and all the skill I have

Remembers not these garments; nor I know not Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me; For (as I am a man) I think this lady

To be my child Cordelia. Cor. And so I am! I am!

Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray weep not.

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me; for your sisters Have, as I do remember, done me wrong. You have some cause, they have not.

Cor. No cause, no cause. Lear. Am I in France?

Kent. In your own kingdom, sir. Lear. Do not abuse me.

Doct. Be comforted, good madam. The great rage

You see is kill'd in him; and yet it is danger To make him even o'er
the time he has lost. Desire him to go in. Trouble him no more Till
further settling.

Cor. Will't please your Highness walk? Lear. You must bear with
me.

Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish. Exeunt.
Manent Kent and Gentleman.

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

Kent. Most certain, sir.

Gent. Who is conductor of his people?

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

Gent. They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the Earl of Kent in
Germany.

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

the kingdom approach apace.

Gent. The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir. [Exit.]

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

Exit.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The British camp near Dover.

Enter, with Drum and Colours, Edmund, Regan, Gentleman, and

Soldiers.

Edm. Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold, Or whether since
he is advis'd by aught

To change the course. He's full of alteration

And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure. [Exit an Officer.]

Reg. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried. Edm. Tis to be
doubted, madam.

Reg. 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?

Edm. In honour'd love.

Reg. But have you never found my brother's way

To the forfended place?

Edm. That thought abuses you.

Reg. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers. Edm. No, by mine honour, madam.

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

Edm. Fear me not.

She and the Duke her husband!

Enter, with Drum and Colours, Albany, Goneril, Soldiers. Gon.

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

Alb. Our very loving sister, well bemet.

Sir, this I hear: the King is come to his daughter, With others whom the rigour of our state

Forc'd to cry out. Where I could not be honest, I never yet was valiant. For this business,

It toucheth us as France invades our land,

Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear, Most just and heavy causes make oppose. Edm. Sir, you speak nobly.

Reg. Why is this reason'd?

Gon. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;

For these domestic and particular broils

Are not the question here. Alb. Let's then determine

With th' ancient of war on our proceeding.

Edm. I shall attend you presently at your tent. Reg. Sister, you'll go with us?

Gon. No.

Reg. 'Tis most convenient. Pray you go with us. Gon. [aside] O, ho, I know the riddle.- I will go. [As they are going out,] enter Edgar [disguised].

Edg. If e'er your Grace had speech with man so poor, Hear me one word.

Alb. I'll overtake you.- Speak.

Exeunt [all but Albany and Edgar].

Edg. 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! Alb. Stay till I have read the letter.

Edg. I was forbid it.

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

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

Exit [Edgar]. Enter Edmund.

Edm. 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 urg'd on you.

Alb. We will greet the time. Exit.

Edm. 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, the Powers of France over the stage, Cordelia with her Father in her hand, and exeunt.

Enter Edgar and Gloucester.

Edg. Here, father, take the shadow of this tree

For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive. If ever I return to you again,

I'll bring you comfort.

Glou. Grace go with you, sir! Exit [Edgar].

Alarum and retreat within. Enter Edgar,

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

Glou. No further, sir. A man may rot even here. Edg. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure Their going hence, even as their coming hither; Ripeness is all. Come on.

Glou. And that's true too.

Exeunt.

SCENE III.

The British camp, near Dover.

Enter, in conquest, with Drum and Colours, Edmund; Lear and Cordelia as prisoners; Soldiers, Captain. Edm. Some officers take them away. Good guard Until their greater pleasures first be known

That are to censure them. Cor. 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 outfrown false Fortune's frown. Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters? Lear. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison. We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage.

When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down

And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,

And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh

At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues

Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too- Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out- And take upon 's the mystery of things,

As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out, In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones That ebb and flow by th' moon.

Edm. Take them away.

Lear. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,

The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee? He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven

And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes. The goodyears shall devour 'em, flesh and fell,

Ere they shall make us weep! We'll see 'em starv'd first. Come.
Exeunt [Lear and Cordelia, guarded].

Edm. Come hither, Captain; hark.

Take thou this note [gives a paper]. Go follow them to prison. One step I have advanc'd thee. If thou dost

As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way

To noble fortunes. Know thou this, that men

Are as the time is. To be tender-minded

Does not become a sword. Thy great employment

Will not bear question. Either say thou'lt do't, Or thrive by other means.

Capt. I'll do't, my lord.

Edm. About it! and write happy when th' hast done. Mark- I say, instantly; and carry it so

As I have set it down.

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

Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, Soldiers.

Alb. Sir, you have show'd to-day your valiant strain, And fortune
led you well. You have the captives Who 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.

Edm. 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

And 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, t' appear

Where you shall hold your session. At this time

We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend; And the best quarrels, in the heat, are curs'd

By those that feel their sharpness.

The question of Cordelia and her father

Requires a fitter place. Alb. Sir, by your patience,

I hold you but a subject of this war, Not as a brother.

Reg. 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. Gon. Not so hot!

In his own grace he doth exalt himself

More than in your addition. Reg. In my rights

By me invested, he compeers the best.

Gon. That were the most if he should husband you. Reg. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

Gon. Holla, holla!

That eye that told you so look'd but asquint. Reg. 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.

Gon. Mean you to enjoy him?

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

Edm. Nor in thine, lord.

Alb. Half-blooded fellow, yes.

Reg. [to Edmund] Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine. Alb. Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee

On capital treason; and, in thine attaint,

This gilded serpent [points to Goneril]. For your claim, fair sister,
I bar it in the interest of my wife.

'Tis she is subcontracted to this lord,

And I, her husband, contradict your banes. If you will marry, make
your loves to me; My lady is bespoke.

Gon. An interlude!

Alb. Thou art arm'd, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound. If none
appear to prove upon thy person

Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,

There is my pledge [throws down a glove]! I'll prove it on thy heart,

Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less

Than I have here proclaim'd thee. Reg. Sick, O, sick!

Gon. [aside] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

Edm. There's my exchange [throws 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. Alb. A herald, ho!

Edm. A herald, ho, a herald!

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

Took their discharge.

Reg. My sickness grows upon me.

Alb. She is not well. Convey her to my tent. [Exit Regan, led.]

Enter a Herald.

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

Capt. Sound, trumpet! A trumpet sounds.

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

Her. Again! Second trumpet.

Her. Again! Third trumpet. Trumpet answers within.

Enter Edgar, armed, at the third sound, a Trumpet before him.

Alb. Ask him his purposes, why he appears

Upon this call o' th' trumpet. Her. What are you?

Your name, your quality? and why you answer

This present summons?

Edg. Know my name is lost;

By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit. Yet am I noble as
the adversary

I come to cope.

Alb. Which is that adversary?

Edg. What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester? Edm.
Himself. What say'st thou to him?

Edg. Draw thy sword,

That, if my speech offend a noble heart, Thy arm may do thee
justice. Here is mine. Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours, My
oath, and my profession. I protest-

Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence, Despite thy
victor sword and fire-new fortune, Thy valour and thy heart- thou
art a traitor;

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father; Conspirant 'gainst
this high illustrious prince; And from th' extremest upward of thy
head

To the descent and dust beneath 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.

Edm. In wisdom I should ask thy name;

But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,

And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes, What safe
and nicely I might well delay

By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn. Back do I toss those
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. Fight. [Edmund falls.]

Alb. Save him, save him!

Gon. This is mere practice, Gloucester.

By th' law of arms thou wast not bound to answer An unknown
opposite. Thou art not vanquish'd, But cozen'd and beguil'd.

Alb. Shut your mouth, dame,

Or with this paper shall I stop it. [Shows her her letter to

Edmund.]- [To Edmund]. Hold, sir.

[To Goneril] Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil. No tearing, lady! I perceive you know it.

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

Alb. Most monstrous! Know'st thou this paper?

Gon. Ask me not what I know. Exit.

Alb. Go after her. She's desperate; govern her. [Exit an Officer.]

Edm. What, you have charg'd 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.

Edg. Let's exchange charity.

I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund; If more, the more th'
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 scourge us.

The dark and vicious place where thee he got

Cost him his eyes.

Edm. Th' hast spoken right; 'tis true.

The wheel is come full circle; I am here. Alb. 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! Edg. Worthy prince, I know't.

Alb. Where have you hid yourself?

How have you known the miseries of your father? Edg. 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 with the pain of death would hourly die Rather than die at once!) taught me to shift

Into a madman's rags, t' assume a semblance

That very dogs disdain'd; and in this habit

Met I my father with his bleeding rings,

Their precious stones new lost; became his guide, Led him, begg'd for him, sav'd 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.

Edm. This speech of yours hath mov'd me,

And shall perchance do good; but speak you on; You look as you had something more to say.

Alb. If there be more, more woful, hold it in; For I am almost ready to dissolve,

Hearing of this.

Edg. This would have seem'd a period

To such as love not sorrow; but another,

To amplify too much, would make much more, And top extremity.

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

Who, having seen me in my worst estate, Shunn'd my abhorr'd
society; but then, finding Who 'twas that so endur'd, with his
strong arms He fastened on my neck, and bellowed out
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him That ever ear receiv'd;
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 tranc'd.

Alb. But who was this?

Edg. Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise Followed his
enemy king and did him service Improper for a slave.

Enter a Gentleman with a bloody knife. Gent. Help, help! O, help!

Edg. What kind of help? Alb. Speak, man.

Edg. What means that bloody knife? Gent. 'Tis hot, it smokes.

It came even from the heart of- O! she's dead!

Alb. Who dead? Speak, man.

Gent. Your lady, sir, your lady! and her sister

By her is poisoned; she hath confess'd it.

Edm. I was contracted to them both. All three

Now marry in an instant. Enter Kent.

Edg. Here comes Kent.

Alb. Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead. [Exit Gentleman.]

This judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble

Touches us not with pity. O, is this he?

The time will not allow the compliment

That very manners urges. Kent. I am come

To bid my king and master aye good night.

Is he not here?

Alb. Great thing of us forgot!

Speak, Edmund, where's the King? and where's Cordelia? The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in.

Seest thou this object, Kent? Kent. Alack, why thus?

Edm. Yet Edmund was belov'd.

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

Alb. Even so. Cover their faces.

Edm. I pant for life. Some good I mean to do, Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send

(Be brief in't) to the castle; for my writ Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia. Nay, send in time.

Alb. Run, run, O, run!

Edg. To who, my lord? Who has the office? Send

Thy token of reprieve.

Edm. Well thought on. Take my sword; Give it the Captain.

Alb. Haste thee for thy life. [Exit Edgar.]

Edm. 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.

Alb. The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile. [Edmund is borne off.]

Enter Lear, with Cordelia [dead] in his arms, [Edgar, Captain, and others following].

Lear. Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stone. Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so

That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!

I know when one is dead, and when one lives. She's dead as earth.
Lend me a looking glass. If that her breath will mist or stain the
stone, Why, then she lives.

Kent. Is this the promis'd end? Edg. Or image of that horror? Alb.
Fall and cease!

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

Kent. O my good master! Lear. Prithee away!

Edg. 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

Lear. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all! I might have sav'd
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.

Capt. 'Tis true, my lords, he did. Lear. Did I not, fellow?

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion

I would have made them skip. I am old now, And these same
crosses spoil me. Who are you? Mine eyes are not o' th' best. I'll tell
you straight. Kent. If fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated, One
of them we behold.

Lear. This' a dull sight. Are you not Kent? Kent. The same-

Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.

He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten. Kent. No, my good lord; I am the very man-

Lear. I'll see that straight.

Kent. That from your first of difference and decay

Have followed your sad steps. Lear. You're welcome hither.

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

And desperately are dead. Lear. Ay, so I think.

Alb. He knows not what he says; and vain is it

That we present us to him. Edg. Very bootless.

Enter a Captain.

Capt. Edmund is dead, my lord. Alb. That's but a trifle here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent.

What comfort to this great decay may come Shall be applied. For
us, we will resign, During the life of this old Majesty,
To him our absolute power; [to Edgar and Kent] you to your rights;
With boot, and such addition as your honours

Have more than merited.- All friends shall taste

The wages of their virtue, and all foes

The cup of their deservings.- O, see, see!

Lear. And my poor fool is 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!
He dies.

Edg. He faints! My lord, my lord! Kent. Break, heart; I prithee
break! Edg. Look up, my lord.

Kent. Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass! He hates him

That would upon the rack of this tough world

Stretch him out longer. Edg. He is gone indeed.

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

Alb. 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 god's state sustain. Kent. I have a
journey, sir, shortly to go.

My master calls me; I must not say no.

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

Exeunt with a dead march.

THE END

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