

## K I N G L E A R.

## PERSONS REPRESENTED.

LEAR, *King of Britain.*  
 King of FRANCE.  
 Duke of BURGUNDY.  
 Duke of CORNWALL.  
 Duke of ALBANY.  
 Earl of KENT.  
 Earl of GLOSTER.  
 EDGAR, *Son to Gloster.*  
 EDMUND, *Bastard Son to Gloster.*  
 CURAN, *a Courtier.*  
 Old Man, *Tenant to Gloster.*  
 Physician.

Fool.  
 OSWALD, *Steward to Goneril.*  
 An Officer, *employed by Edmund.*  
 Gentleman, *Attendant on Cordelia.*  
 A Herald.  
 Servants to Cornwall.  
 GONERIL, }  
 REGAN, } *Daughters to Lear.*  
 CORDELIA, }  
 Knights *attending on the King, Officers, Messengers,*  
*Soldiers, and Attendants.*

SCENE — Britain.

## ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Room of State in King Lear's Palace.**Enter KENT, GLOSTER, and EDMUND.**Kent.*

I THOUGHT, the king had more affected the duke of Albany, than Cornwall.

*Glo.* It did always seem so to us: but now, in the division of the kingdom, <sup>1)</sup> it appears not which of the dukes he values most; for equalities are so weigh'd, that curiosity in neither <sup>2)</sup> can make choice of either's moiety. <sup>3)</sup>

*Kent.* Is not this your son, my lord?

*Glo.* His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it.

*Kent.* I cannot conceive you.

*Glo.* Sir, this young fellow's mother could: where-upon she grew round-wombed; and had, indeed, sir, a son for her cradle, ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

*Kent.* I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper. <sup>4)</sup>

*Glo.* But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, <sup>5)</sup> who yet is no dearer in my account: though this knave came somewhat 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.* No, my lord.

*Glo.* 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.

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

[Trumpets sound within.]

*Enter LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and Attendants.**Lear.* Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloster.*Glo.* I shall, my liege.

[Exit GLOSTER and EDMUND.]

*Lear.* Mean-time we shall express our darker purpose. <sup>6)</sup>

Give me the map there. — Know, that we have divided,

In three, our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent <sup>7)</sup> To shake all cares and business from our age; Conferring them on younger strengths, while we Unburden'd crawl toward death. — Our son of Cornwall

And you, our no less loving son of Albany, We have this hour a constant will <sup>8)</sup> 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 merit doth most challenge it. — Goneril, Our eldest-born, speak first.

*Gon.* Sir, I

Do love you more than words can wield the matter, Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty; Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare; No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour: As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found.

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable; Beyond all manner of so much <sup>9)</sup> I love you.

*Cor.* What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent.

[Aside.]

*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.* I am made of that self metal as my sister, And prize me at her worth. In my true heart I find, she names my very deed of love; Only she comes too short, — that I profess <sup>10)</sup> Myself an enemy to all other joys, Which the most precious square of sense possesses; <sup>11)</sup> And find, I am alone felicitate In your dear highness' love.

*Cor.* Then poor Cordelia! [Aside.] 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, <sup>12)</sup> and pleasure, Than that confirm'd on Goneril. — Now, our joy, Although the last, not least; to whose young love The vines of France, and milk of Burgundy, Strive to be interest'd; <sup>13)</sup> 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 <sup>14)</sup> 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; nor 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 this with thy heart?*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 operations 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 <sup>15)</sup> 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! —

[To CORDELIA.]

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 with my power, Pre-eminence, and all the large effects That troop with majesty. — Ourselves, by monthly course,

With reservation of an hundred knights, By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain The name, and all the additions to a king; <sup>16)</sup> The sway,

Revenue, execution of the rest, <sup>17)</sup>

Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm, This coronet part between you. [Giving the Crown.]

*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 would'st thou do, old man? Think'st thou, that duty shall have dread to speak, When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound,

When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom; 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 <sup>18)</sup> 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. <sup>19)</sup>

*Lear.* Now, by Apollo, —*Kent.* Now, by Apollo, king,

Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

*Lear.* O, vassal! miscreant!

[Laying 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 betwixt our sentence and our power; (Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,) Our potency made good, <sup>20)</sup> 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, <sup>21)</sup> This shall not be revok'd.

*Kent.* Fare thee well, king: since thus thou wilt appear,

Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here. —

The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,

[To CORDELIA.]



That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said!—  
And your large speeches may your deeds approve,

[To REGAN and GONERIL.

That good effects may spring from words of love.—  
Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;  
He'll shape his old course<sup>22)</sup> in a country new.

[Exit.

Re-enter GLOSTER; with FRANCE, BURGUNDY, and Attendants.

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

Lear. My lord of Burgundy,

We first address towards you, who with this king  
Hath rivall'd for our daughter; What, in the least,  
Will you require in present dower with her,  
Or cease your quest of love?<sup>23)</sup>

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<sup>24)</sup> 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. Sir,  
Will you, with those infirmities she owes,<sup>25)</sup>  
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,  
Dower'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.<sup>26)</sup>

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that  
made me,

I tell you all her wealth. — For you, great king,

[To FRANCE.

I would not from your love make such a stray,  
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
To avert your liking a more worthier way,  
Than on a wretch whom nature is asham'd  
Almost to 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 into taint:<sup>27)</sup> which to believe of her,  
Must be a faith, that reason without miracle  
Could never plant in me.

Cor. I yet beseech your majesty,  
(If for I want<sup>28)</sup> that glib and oily art,  
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,  
I'll do't before I speak,) that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,  
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,  
That hath 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  
That I am glad I have not, though, not to have it,  
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear. Better thou  
Had'st not been born, than not to have pleas'd me  
better.

France. Is it but this?<sup>29)</sup> 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 is not love,  
When it is mingled with respects,<sup>30)</sup> that stand

Aloof from the entire point.<sup>31)</sup> 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, thou 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 dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:

Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy

Shall buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me. —

Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind

Thou lovest here,<sup>32)</sup> 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 her's again: — Therefore be gone,

Without our grace, our love, our benison.

Come, noble Burgundy.

[Flourish. Exit LEAR, BURGUNDY, CORN-  
WALL, ALBANY, GLOSTER, 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 plaited cunning<sup>33)</sup>  
hides;

Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.

Well may you prosper!

France. Come, my fair Cordelia.

[Exit LEAR and CORDELIA.

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

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 loved 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-engrafted  
condition,<sup>34)</sup> but, therewithal, the unruly wayward-  
ness 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 us hit<sup>35)</sup>  
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 of it.

Gon. We must do something, and i'the heat.<sup>36)</sup>  
[Exit.

## SCENE II.

A Hall in the Earl of Gloster's Castle.

Enter EDMUND, with a Letter.

Edm. Thou, nature, art my goddess;<sup>37)</sup> to thy law  
My services are bound: Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom;<sup>38)</sup> and permit  
The curiosity of nations<sup>39)</sup> to deprive me,<sup>40)</sup>  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines  
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?  
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take  
More composition and fierce quality,  
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,  
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,  
Got 'tween asleep and wake? — Well then,  
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:  
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund,  
As to the legitimate: Fine word, — legitimate!  
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper: —  
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter GLOSTER.

Glo. Kent banish'd thus! And France in choler  
parted!

And the king gone to-night! subscrib'd his power!<sup>41)</sup>  
Confin'd to exhibition!<sup>42)</sup> All this done  
Upon the gad! — — <sup>43)</sup> Edmund! How now; what  
news!

Edm. So please your lordship, none.

[Putting up the Letter.

Glo. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that  
letter?

Edm. I know no news, my lord.

Glo. What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord.

Glo. No? what needed then that terrible despatch  
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; for  
so much as I have perus'd, I find it not fit for  
your overlooking.

Glo. 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.  
Glo. 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.

Glo. [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<sup>44)</sup>  
bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who  
sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered.  
Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If  
our father would sleep till I waked him, you should*

enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the be-  
loved of your brother, Edgar. — Humph — Con-  
spiracy! — Sleep till I waked him — you should  
enjoy half his revenue, — My son Edgar! Had he  
a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed  
it in? — When came this to you? Who brought it?  
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.

Glo. 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.

Glo. It is his.

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

Glo. Hath he never heretofore sounded you in  
this business?

Edm. Never, my lord: But I have often heard  
him 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.

Glo. O villain, villain! — His very opinion in the  
letter! — Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, bru-  
tish 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 testimo-  
ny of his intent, you shall run a certain course;  
where, if you<sup>45)</sup> 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,<sup>46)</sup> and to no other pretence<sup>47)</sup> of  
danger.

Glo. 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.

Glo. He cannot be such a monster.

Edm. Nor is not, sure.

Glo. 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.<sup>48)</sup>

Edm. I will seek him, sir, presently; convey the  
business<sup>49)</sup> as I shall find means, and acquaint you  
withal.

Glo. These late eclipses in the sun and moon port-  
end no good to us: Though the wisdom of nature<sup>50)</sup>  
can reason it thus and thus, yet nature  
finds itself scourged by the sequent effects: love  
cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities,  
mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason;  
and the bond cracked between son and father. This  
villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's  
son against father; the king falls from bias of na-  
ture; there's father against child. We have seen  
the best of our time: Machinations, hollowness,  
treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us dis-  
quietly to our graves! — Find out this villain, Ed-  
mund: it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully: —  
And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his  
offence, honesty! — Strange! 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 dis-  
asters, the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we



were villains by necessity; fools, by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers,<sup>51)</sup> 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. — Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar —

*Enter EDGAR.*

and pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy; my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam. — O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! fa, sol, la, mi.<sup>52)</sup>

*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.* Why, 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, till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure; which at this instant so rageth in him, that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

*Edg.* Some villain hath done me wrong.

*Edm.* That's my fear. I pray you, have a content 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 you, go; there's my key: — If you do stir abroad, go armed.

*Edg.* Armed, brother?

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

*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.

*A Room in the Duke of Albany's Palace.*

*Enter GONERIL and Steward.*

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

*Stew.* Ay, madam.

*Gon.* By day and night! he wrongs me; every hour He flashes into one gross crime or other, That set 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.

*Stew.* He's coming, madam; I hear him.

*[Horns within.]*

*Gon.* Put on what weary negligence you please, You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question: If he dislike it, let him to my sister, Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one, Not to be over-rul'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.<sup>53)</sup>

Remember what I have said.

*Stew.* 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.

*A Hall in the same.*

*Enter KENT, disguised.*

*Kent.* If but as well I other accents borrow, That can my speech diffuse,<sup>54)</sup> my good intent May carry through itself to that full issue For which I raz'd my likeness. — Now, banish'd Kent, If thou can'st 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 would'st 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;<sup>55)</sup> to fear judgment; to fight, when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish.<sup>56)</sup>

*Lear.* What art thou?

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

*Lear.* If thou be as poor for a subject, as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What would'st thou?

*Kent.* Service.

*Lear.* Who would'st 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 qualify'd 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 any thing: 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:

*Enter Steward.*

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

*Stew.* So please you, —

*Lear.* What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back. — Where's my fool, ho? — I think the world's asleep. — 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 answer'd 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 is wrong'd.

*Lear.* Thou but remember'st me of mine own conception; I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity,<sup>57)</sup> than as a very pretence<sup>58)</sup> 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.<sup>59)</sup>

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

*Re-enter Steward.*

O, you sir, you sir, come you hither: Who am I, sir?

*Stew.* My lady's father.

*Lear.* My lady's father! my lord's knave: you whoreson dog! you slave! you cur!

*Stew.* I am none of this, my lord; I beseech you, pardon me.

*Lear.* Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?  
*[Striking him.]*

*Stew.* I'll not be struck, my lord.

*Kent.* Nor tripped neither; you base foot-ball player.

*[Tripping up his heels.]*

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

*Kent.* Come, sir, arise, away; I'll teach you differences; away, away: If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry; but away: go to; Have you wisdom? so.  
*[Pushes the Steward out.]*

*Lear.* Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of thy service.  
*[Giving KENT Money.]*

*Enter Fool.*

*Fool.* Let me hire him too; — Here's my coxcomb.

*[Giving 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 is out of favour: Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly: There, take my coxcomb: Why, this fellow has banish'd two of his 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,<sup>60)</sup> 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 that must to kennel; he must be whipp'd out, when Lady, the brach,<sup>61)</sup> may stand by the 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,<sup>62)</sup>  
Ride more than thou goest,  
Learn more than thou trowest,<sup>63)</sup>  
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.

*Lear.* This is nothing, fool.

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

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

*Fool.* 'Pr'ythee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to; he will not believe a fool. *[To KENT.]*

*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 counsel'd thee

To give away thy land,

Come place him here by me, —

Or 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:<sup>64)</sup> and ladies too, they will not let me have all fool to myself; they'll be snatching — Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

*Lear.* What two crowns shall they be?

*Fool.* Why, after I have cut the egg i'the middle, and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i'the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou borest thine ass on thy back over the dirt: Thou had'st little wit in thy bald crown, when thou gavest thy golden one



away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipp'd that first finds it so.

*Fools had ne'er less grace in a year;* <sup>65</sup> [Singing.  
For wise men are grown foppish;  
And know not how their wits to wear,  
Their manners are so apish.

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

**Fool.** I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mother: for when thou gavest them the rod, and put'st down thine own breeches,

*Then they for sudden joy did weep,* [Singing.  
*And I for sorrow sung,*  
*That such a king should play bo-peep,*  
*And go the fools among.*

'Pr'ythee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie; I would fain learn to lie.

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

*Enter GONERIL.*

**Lear.** How now, daughter? what makes that frontlet <sup>66</sup> on? Methinks you are too much of late i'the frown.

**Fool.** Thou wast a pretty fellow, when thou had'st 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. — Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face [*to Gon.*] bids me, though you say nothing. Mum, mum, He that keeps nor crust nor crum,  
Weary of all, shall want some. —

That's a sheal'd peascod. <sup>67</sup> [*Pointing to Lear.*

**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 <sup>68</sup>  
By your allowance; <sup>69</sup> 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  
Will call discreet proceeding.

**Fool.** For you trow, nuncle,  
The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,  
That it had its head bit off by its young.  
So, out went the candle, and we were left dark-  
ling. <sup>70</sup>

**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, which of late transform you from what you rightly are.

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

**Lear.** Does any here know me? — Why this is not Lear: does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes? Either his notion weakens, or his discernings are lethargied. — Sleeping or waking? —

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Ha! sure 'tis not so. — Who is it that can tell me who I am? — Lear's shadow? I would learn that; for by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters. <sup>71</sup>

**Fool.** Which they will make an obedient father. <sup>72</sup>

**Lear.** Your name, fair gentlewoman?

**Gon.** Come, sir;  
This admiration is much o'the favour <sup>73</sup>  
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 debauch'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, <sup>74</sup>  
To be such men as may besort your age,  
And 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? [*to Alb.*] Speak, sir. — Prepare my horses.

Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child,  
Than the sea-monster! <sup>75</sup>

**Alb.** Pray, sir, be patient.  
**Lear.** Detested kite! thou liest: [*To Goneril.*

My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
That all particulars of duty know:  
And in the most exact regard support  
The worship of their name. — O most small fault,  
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
Which, like an engine, <sup>76</sup> 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,

[*Striking 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, — Here, 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 <sup>77</sup> 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 <sup>78</sup> fret channels in her cheeks;  
Turn all her mother's pains, and benefits, <sup>79</sup>

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.

*Re-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! — Life and death! I am asham'd  
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus:

[*To Goneril.*  
That these hot tears, which break from me per-  
force,  
Should make thee worth them. — Blasts and fogs  
upon thee!

The untended woundings <sup>80</sup> of a father's curse  
Pierce every sense about thee! — Old fond eyes,  
Bewep this cause again, I'll pluck you out;  
And cast you, with the waters that you lose,  
To temper clay. — Ha! 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 wolfish visage. Thou shalt find,  
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think  
I have cast off for ever; thou shalt, I warrant thee.

[*Exit 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!  
You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master.

[*To the Fool.*  
**Fool.** Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry, and take  
the fool with thee.

A fox, when one has caught her,  
And such a daughter,  
Should sure to the slaughter,  
If my cap would buy a halter;  
So the fool follows after. [*Exit.*

**Gon.** This man hath had good counsel: — A hundred  
knights!

'Tis politic, and safe, to let him keep  
At point, <sup>81</sup> a hundred knights. Yes, that on every  
dream,

Each buz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,  
He may enguard his dotage with their powers,  
And hold our lives in mercy. — Oswald, I say! —  
**Alb.** Well, you may fear too far.

**Gon.** Safer than trust: <sup>82</sup>  
Let me still take away the harms I fear,  
Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart:  
What he hath utter'd, I have writ my sister;  
If she sustain him and his hundred knights,  
When I have show'd the unfitness, — How now,  
Oswald?

*Enter Steward.*

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

**Stew.** Ay, 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. <sup>83</sup> Get you gone;  
And hasten your return. [*Exit Stew.*] No, no, my lord,  
This milky gentleness, and course of yours,  
Though I condemn it not, yet, under pardon,  
You are much more attack'd <sup>84</sup> 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; the event. [*Exit.*

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### SCENE V.

*Court before the same.*

*Enter LEAR, KENT, and Fool.*

**Lear.** Go you before to Gloster with these letters:  
acquaint my daughter no further with any thing  
you know, than comes from her demand out of the  
letter: If your diligence be not speedy, I shall be  
there before you. <sup>85</sup>

**Kent.** I will not sleep, my lord, till I have deli-  
vered your letter. [*Exit.*

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

**Lear.** Ay, boy.

**Fool.** Then, I pr'ythee, be merry; thy wit shall  
not go slipshod.

**Lear.** Ha, ha, ha!

**Fool.** Shalt see, thy other daughter will use thee  
kindly: <sup>86</sup> for though she's as like this as a crab  
is like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.

**Lear.** Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

**Fool.** She will taste as like this, as a crab does  
to a crab. Thou canst tell, why one's nose stands  
i'the middle of his face?

**Lear.** No.

**Fool.** Why, to keep his eyes on either side his  
nose; that what a man cannot smell out, he may  
spy into.

**Lear.** I did her wrong: — <sup>87</sup>

**Fool.** Can'st 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 his head in; not to give it  
away to his daughters, and leave his horns with-  
out 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 wouldest make a good  
fool.

**Lear.** To take it again perforce! — <sup>88</sup> 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 should'st not have been old, before  
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 Gentleman.*

How now! are the horses ready?

**Gent.** Ready, my lord.

**Lear.** Come, boy.

**Fool.** She that is maid now, and laughs at my  
departure,  
Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut  
shorter. [*Exit.*

### ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Court within the Castle of the  
Earl of Gloster.*

*Enter EDMUND 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 to-night.

*Edm.* How comes that?

*Cur.* Nay, I know not: You have heard of the news abroad; I mean, the whispered 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 dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

*Edm.* Not a word.

*Cur.* You may 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 queazy question, <sup>1)</sup> 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'the night, i'the haste, And Regan with him; Have you nothing said Upon his party 'gainst the duke of Albany? Advise yourself. <sup>2)</sup>

*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  
[*Wounds his arm.*]  
Of my more fierce endeavour: I have seen drunkards Do more than this in sport. — Father! Father! Stop, stop! No help?

*Enter GLOSTER, and Servants with Torches.*

*Glo.* 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 his auspicious mistress:—

*Glo.* But where is he?

*Edm.* Look, sir, I bleed.

*Glo.* Where is the villain, Edmund?

*Edm.* Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could —

*Glo.* Pursue him, ho! — Go after. — [*Exit Servant.*]

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 the 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, lanc'd mine arm: But when he saw my best alarm'd spirits, Bold in the quarrel's right, rous'd to the encounter, Or whether gasted <sup>3)</sup> by the noise I made, Full suddenly he fled.

*Glo.* Let him fly far:

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught; And found — Despatch. — The noble duke my master, My worthy arch <sup>4)</sup> and patron, comes to-night: By his authority I will proclaim it, That he, which finds him, shall deserve our thanks,

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

*Edm.* When I dissuaded him from his intent, And found him pight to do it, with curst speech <sup>5)</sup> 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,) <sup>6)</sup> 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.*

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

[*Trumpets 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. <sup>7)</sup>

*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 the offender. How dost, my lord?

*Glo.* O, madam, my old heart is crack'd, is crack'd! *Reg.* What, did my father's godson seek your life? He whom my father nam'd? your Edgar?

*Glo.* O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid! *Reg.* Was he not companion with the riotous knights That tend upon my father?

*Glo.* I know not, madam: It is too bad, too bad. —

*Edm.* Yes, madam, he was. *Reg.* No marvel then, though he were ill affected; 'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,

To have the waste and spoil 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 child-like office.

*Edm.* 'Twas my duty, sir. *Glo.* He did bewray his practice; <sup>8)</sup> and receiv'd This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

*Corn.* Is he pursued?

*Glo.* Ay, my good lord, he is. *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.

*Glo.* 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 Gloster, of some poize, <sup>9)</sup> 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; <sup>10)</sup> the several messengers From hence attend despatch. Our good old friend, Lay comforts to your bosom; and bestow Your needful counsel to our business, Which craves the instant use.

*Glo.* I serve you, madam: Your graces are right welcome. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II.

*Before Gloster's Castle.*

*Enter KENT and Steward, severally.*

*Stew.* Good dawning to thee, friend: Art of the house?

*Kent.* Ay.

*Stew.* Where may we set our horses?

*Kent.* I'the mire.

*Stew.* Pr'ythee, if thou love me, tell me.

*Kent.* I love thee not.

*Stew.* Why, then I care not for thee.

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

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

*Kent.* Fellow, I know thee.

*Stew.* 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 knave; <sup>11)</sup> a whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that would'st 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'st the least syllable of thy addition. <sup>12)</sup>

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

*Kent.* What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou know'st me? Is it two days ago, since I tripp'd up thy heels, and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue: for, though it be night, the moon shines; I'll make a sop o'the moonshine of you: Draw, you whoreson cullionly barber-monger, draw. [*Drawing his sword.*]

*Stew.* 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, <sup>13)</sup> against the royalty of her father: Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks:—draw, you rascal: come your ways.

*Stew.* Help, ho! murder! help!

*Kent.* Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand; you neat slave, <sup>14)</sup> strike. [*Beating him.*]

*Stew.* Help, ho! murder! murder!

*Enter EDMUND, CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOSTER, and Servants.*

*Edm.* How now? What's the matter? Part.

*Kent.* With you, Goodman boy, if you please; come, I'll flesh you; come on, young master.

*Glo.* 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.

*Stew.* 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 stone-cutter, or a painter, could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two hours at the trade.

*Corn.* Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

*Stew.* 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 will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain <sup>15)</sup> into mortar, and daub the wall 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 has 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 in twain Which are too intrinse <sup>16)</sup> t'unloose: smooth every passion

That in the nature of their lords rebels; Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods; Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon <sup>17)</sup> beaks With every gale and vary of their masters, As knowing nought, like dogs, but following. — A plague upon your epileptic visage! <sup>18)</sup> Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool? Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain, I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot. <sup>19)</sup>

*Corn.* What, art thou mad, old fellow?

*Glo.* 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's his offence?

*Kent.* His countenance likes me not. <sup>20)</sup>

*Corn.* No more, perchance, does mine, or his, or her's.

*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 praised for bluntness, doth affect

A saucy roughness; and constrains the garb, Quite from his nature: <sup>21)</sup> 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 sooth, in sincere verity, Under the allowance of your grand aspect, Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire On flickering Phœbus' front. — <sup>22)</sup>

*Corn.* What mean'st by this?

*Kent.* To go out of my dialect, which you commend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer: he that beguiled you, in a plain accent, was a plain knave: which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to treat me to it. <sup>23)</sup>

*Corn.* What was the offence you gave him?

*Stew.* Never any: <sup>24)</sup>

It pleas'd the king his master, very late, To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;

When he, conjunct, and flattering his displeasure,



## SCENE III.

*A part of the Heath.**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. While 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; <sup>30)</sup>  
And with presented nakedness out-face  
The winds, and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of Bedlam beggars, <sup>31)</sup> who, with roaring voices,  
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, <sup>32)</sup> nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, <sup>33)</sup> sheep-cotes and mills,  
Sometime with lunatic bans, <sup>34)</sup> sometime with prayers,  
Enforce their charity. — Poor Turlygood! poor  
Tom! <sup>35)</sup>  
That's something yet; — Edgar I nothing am. *[Exit.]*

## SCENE IV.

*Before Gloster's Castle.**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.* How!  
Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?  
*Kent.* No, my lord.  
*Fool.* Ha, ha; look! he wears cruel garters! <sup>36)</sup>  
Horses are tied by the heads; dogs, and bears, by  
the neck; monkeys by the loins, and men by the  
legs: when a man is over-lusty at legs, then he  
wears wooden nether-stocks. <sup>37)</sup>  
*Lear.* What's he, that hath so much thy place  
mistook  
To set thee here?  
*Kent.* It is both he and she,  
Your son and daughter.  
*Lear.* No.  
*Kent.* Yes.  
*Lear.* No, I say.  
*Kent.* I say, yea.  
*Lear.* No, no; they would not.  
*Kent.* Yes, they have.  
*Lear.* By Jupiter, I swear, no.  
*Kent.* By Juno, I swear, ay.  
*Lear.* They durst not do't;  
They could not, would not do't; 'tis worse than  
murder,  
To do upon respect such violent outrage: <sup>38)</sup>  
Resolve me, with all modest haste, which way  
Thou might'st 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

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Tripp'd me behind: being down, insulted, rail'd,  
And put upon him such a deal of man,  
That worthy'd him, got praises of the king  
For him attempting who was self-subdu'd;  
And, in the fleshment <sup>25)</sup> of this dread exploit,  
Drew on me here. <sup>26)</sup>

*Kent.* None of these rogues, and cowards,  
But Ajax is their fool. <sup>27)</sup>

*Corn.* Fetch forth the stocks, ho!  
You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,  
We'll teach you —

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

*Corn.* Fetch forth the stocks: ho!  
As I've 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  
*[Stocks brought out.]*

*Corn.* This is a fellow of the self-same colour  
Our sister speaks of: — Come, bring away the  
stocks.

*Glo.* 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 contemned'st wretches,  
For pilferings and most common trespasses,  
Are punish'd with: the king must take it ill,  
That he's so slightly valued in his messenger,  
Should have him thus restrain'd.

*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. 28)*

Come, my good lord; away.  
*[Exit REGAN and CORNWALL.]*

*Glo.* 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. <sup>29)</sup>  
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:  
Give you good morrow!

*Glo.* The duke's to blame in this; 'twill be ill taken.  
*[Exit.]*

*Kent.* Good king, that must approve the common  
saw! <sup>29)</sup>

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 shall find time  
From this enormous state, — seeking to give  
Losses their remedies: — All weary and o'er-watch'd,  
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
This shameful lodging.

Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy  
wheel!  
*[He sleeps.]*

From Goneril his mistress, salutations;  
Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission, <sup>39)</sup>  
Which presently they read: on whose contents,  
They summon'd up their meiny, <sup>40)</sup> 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 that 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 the poor. —

But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours <sup>41)</sup>  
for thy daughters, as thou can'st tell in a year.

*Lear.* O, how this mother <sup>42)</sup> swells up toward  
my heart!

*Hysterica passio!* down, thou climbing sorrow,  
Thy elements 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 than what you  
speak of?

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

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

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

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'the stocks, fool.

*Re-enter LEAR, with GLOSTER.*

*Lear.* Deny to speak with me? They are sick?  
they are weary?

They have travell'd hard to-night? Mere fetches;  
The images of revolt and flying off!  
Fetch me a better answer.

*Glo.* My dear lord,  
You know the fiery quality of the duke;  
How unremoveable and fix'd he is  
In his own course.

*Lear.* Vengeance! plague! death! confusion! —  
Fiery? what quality? why, Gloster, Gloster,  
I'd speak with the duke of Cornwall, and his wife.

*Glo.* Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.  
*Lear.* Inform'd them! Dost thou understand me,  
man?

*Glo.* 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  
*[Looking on KENT.]*

Should he sit here? This act persuades me,  
That this remotion <sup>43)</sup> of the duke and her  
Is practice only. <sup>44)</sup> Give me my servant forth:

Go, tell the duke and his wife, I'd speak with them,  
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,  
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum,  
Till it cry — *Sleep to death.*

*Glo.* I'd 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 them i'the paste <sup>45)</sup> alive; she  
rapp'd 'em o'the coxcombs with a stick, and cry'd,  
*Down, wantons, down:* 'Twas her brother, that,  
in pure kindness to his horse, butter'd his hay.

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOSTER, and Servants.*

*Lear.* Good morrow to you both.  
*Corn.* Hail to your grace!  
*[KENT is 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 should'st not be glad,  
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,  
Sepulch'ring an adulteress. — O, are you free?  
*[To KENT.]*

Some other time for that. — Beloved Regan,  
Thy sister's naught: O Regan, she hath tied  
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here, —  
*[Points to his Heart.]*

I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe,  
Of how deprav'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. <sup>46)</sup>

*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? <sup>47)</sup>  
*Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;*

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*Age is unnecessary:* <sup>48</sup>) on my knees I beg,

*That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.* [Kneeling.]

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

*Lear.* 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.* Fye, fye, fye!  
*Lear.* You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames

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

*Reg.* O the blest gods! So will you wish on me, when the rash mood's on. <sup>49</sup>)

*Lear.* No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse; Thy tender-hefted nature <sup>50</sup>) 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, <sup>51</sup>)

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'the kingdom hast thou not forgot, Wherein I thee endow'd.

*Reg.* Good sir, to the purpose. [Trumpets within.]

*Lear.* Who put my man i'the stocks?  
*Corn.* What trumpet's that?

*Enter Steward.*

*Reg.* I know't, my sister's: this approves her letter, That she would soon be here. — Is your lady come?

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

*Corn.* What means your grace?  
*Lear.* Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope

Thou didst not know of't. — Who comes here? O, heavens,

*Enter GONERIL.*

If you do love old men, if your sweet sway Allow obedience, <sup>52</sup>) if yourselves are old, Make it your cause; send down, and take my part! — Art not asham'd to look upon this beard? —

[To GONERIL.]  
O, Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

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

All's not offence, that indiscretion finds, <sup>53</sup>) And dotage terms so.

*Lear.* O, sides, you are too tough! Will you yet hold? — How came my man i'the stocks?

*Corn.* I set him there, sir: but his own disorders Deserv'd much less advancement. <sup>54</sup>)

*Lear.* You! did you?  
*Reg.* I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. <sup>55</sup>)

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'the air;

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

Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took Our youngest born, I could as well be brought

To kneel his throne, and, squire-like, pension beg To keep base life afoot: — Return with her?

Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter <sup>56</sup>) To this detested groom. [Looking on the Steward.]

*Gon.* At your choice, sir.  
*Lear.* I pr'ythee, 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, <sup>57</sup>)

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, sir; 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 now?  
*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 you,

We could control them: If you will come to me, (For now I spy a danger,) I entreat you

To bring but five-and-twenty; to no more Will I give place, or notice.

*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 follow'd

With such a number: What, must I come to you With five-and-twenty, Regan? said you so?

*Reg.* And speak it 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: — I'll go with thee;

[To GONERIL.]  
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 stir these daughters' hearts

Against their father, fool me not so much To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger!

O, 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!

[Exit LEAR, GLOSTER, KENT, and Fool.]  
*Corn.* Let us withdraw, 'twill be a storm.

[Storm heard at a distance.]  
*Reg.* This house

Is little; the old man and his people cannot Be well bestow'd.

*Gon.* 'Tis his own blame; he hath put <sup>58</sup>) 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 Gloster?

*Re-enter GLOSTER.*

*Corn.* Follow'd the old man forth: — he is return'd.  
*Glo.* The king is in high rage.

*Corn.* Whither is he going?  
*Glo.* 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.

*Glo.* 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'the storm.

[Exit.]

## ACT III.

### SCENE I. A Heath.

*A Storm is heard, with Thunder and Lightning.*  
*Enter KENT, and a Gentleman, meeting.*

*Kent.* Who's here, beside foul weather?  
*Gent.* One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

*Kent.* I know you; Where's the king?  
*Gent.* Contending with the fretful element:

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 out-scorn The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.

This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear <sup>1</sup>) 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 out-jest His heart-struck injuries.

*Kent.* Sir, I do know you; And dare, upon the warrant of my art, <sup>2</sup>)

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

Throng'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 <sup>3</sup>) of the dukes;

Or the hard reign which both of them have borne Against the old kind king; or something deeper,

Whereof, perchance, these are but furnishings; <sup>4</sup>) But, true it is, from France there comes a power

Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already, Wise in our negligence, have secret feet <sup>5</sup>)

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. Fye 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. [Exit severally.]

## SCENE II.

*Another part of the Heath. Storm continues.*

*Enter LEAR and Fool.*

*Lear.* Blow, wind, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!

You cataracts, and hurricanoes, spout Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!

You sulphurous and thought-executing <sup>6</sup>) fires, Vaunt couriers <sup>7</sup>) to oak-cleaving thunder-bolts,

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

Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once, That make ingrateful man!

*Fool.* O, nuncle, court holy-water <sup>8</sup>) in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o'door. Good

nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters' blessing; here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools.

*Lear.* Rumble thy bellyfull! 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; <sup>9)</sup> why 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 have with two pernicious daughters join'd  
Your high-engender'd battles, 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!  
*Fool.* He that has a house to put his head in, has  
a good head-piece.

*The cod-piece that will house,  
Before the head has any,  
The head and he shall louse; —  
So beggars marry many.*

*The man that makes his toe  
What he his heart should make,  
Shall of a corn cry woe,  
And turn his sleep to wake.*

— for there was never yet fair woman, but she  
made mouths in a glass.

*Enter KENT.*

*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 cod-piece; 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 <sup>10)</sup> the very wanderers of the dark,  
And make them keep their caves: Since I was man,  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never  
Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry  
The affliction, nor the fear.

*Lear.* Let the great gods,  
That keep this dreadful pother 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  
Thou art incestuous: Caitiff, 'to pieces shake,  
That under covert and convenient seeming  
Hast practis'd on man's life! — Close pent-up guilts,  
Rive your concealing continents, <sup>11)</sup> and cry  
These dreadful summoners grace. — <sup>12)</sup> I am a man,  
More sinn'd against, than sinning.

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

*Lear.* My wits begin to turn. —  
Come on, my boy; How dost, my boy? Art cold?  
I am cold myself. — Where is this straw, my fellow?  
The art of our necessities is strange,  
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.* He that has a little tiny wit, —  
With heigh, ho, the wind and the rain, —  
Must make content with his fortunes fit;  
For the rain it raineth every day.

*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'the 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.

*A Room in Gloster's Castle.*

*Enter GLOSTER and EDMUND.*

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

*Edm.* Most savage, and unnatural!

*Glo.* Go to; say you nothing: There is division  
between the dukes; and a worse matter than that:  
I have received a letter this night; — 'tis dangerous  
to be spoken; — I have locked the letter in my  
closet: these injuries the king now bears will be  
revenged home; there is part of a power already  
footed: we must incline to the king. I will seek  
him, and privily relieve him: go you, and maintain  
talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him  
perceived: If he ask for me, I am ill, and gone to  
bed. If I die for it, as no less is threatened me,  
the king my old master must be relieved. 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.

*A part of the Heath, with a Hovel.*

*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. [*Storm still.*]

*Lear.* Let me alone.

*Kent.* Good my lord, enter here.

*Lear.* Wilt break my heart?

*Kent.* I'd 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'the 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, — <sup>13)</sup>  
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;  
No more of that. —

*Kent.* Good my lord, enter here.  
*Lear.* 'Pr'ythee, 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:  
In, boy; go first. — [*To the Fool.*] You houseless  
poverty, —

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep. —  
[*Fool goes in.*]

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 may'st shake the superflux to them,  
And show the heavens more just.

*Edg.* [*Within.*] Fathom and half, fathom and half!  
Poor Tom!

[*The Fool runs out from the Hovel.*]

*Fool.* Come not in here, nuncle, here's a spirit.

Help me, help me!

*Kent.* Give me thy hand. — Who's there?

*Fool.* A spirit, a spirit; he says his name's poor  
Tom.

*Kent.* What art thou that dost grumble there i'the  
straw?

Come forth.

*Enter EDGAR, disguised as a Madman.*

*Edg.* Away! the foul fiend follows me! —  
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. —  
Humph! 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 any thing to poor Tom? whom  
the foul fiend hath led through fire and through  
flame, through ford and whirlpool, over bog and  
quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow,  
and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge;  
made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-  
horse over four-inched bridges, to course his own  
shadow for a traitor: — Bless thy five wits! <sup>14)</sup>  
Tom's a-cold. — O, do de, do de, do de. — Bless  
thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! <sup>15)</sup>  
Do poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend  
vexes: There could I have him now, — and there,  
— and there, — and there again, and there.

[*Storm continues.*]

*Lear.* What, have his daughters brought him to  
this pass? —

Could'st thou save nothing? Did'st thou give them all?  
*Fool.* Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had  
been all ashamed.

*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. <sup>16)</sup>

*Edg.* Pillicock sat on pillicock's hill; —  
Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!  
*Fool.* This cold night will turn us all to fools and  
madmen.

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

*Lear.* What hast thou been?

*Edg.* A serving-man, proud in heart and mind;  
that curled my hair; wore gloves in my cap, <sup>17)</sup>  
served the lust of my mistress's heart, and did the  
act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as  
I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face  
of heaven: one, that slept in the contriving of lust,  
and waked to do it: Wine loved I deeply; dice,  
dearly; and in woman, out-paramoured the Turk:  
False of heart, light of ear, <sup>18)</sup> 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 women: Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy  
hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books,  
and defy the foul fiend. — Still through the haw-  
thorn blows the cold wind: Says suum, mun, ha no  
nonny, dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa; let him  
trots by. [*Storm still continues.*]

*Lear.* Why, thou wert better in thy grave, than  
to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity  
of the skies. — Is man no more than this? Consi-  
der him well: Thou owest the worm no silk, the  
beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no per-  
fume: — Ha! here's three of us are sophisticated!  
— Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man  
is no more than such a poor, bare, forked animal  
as thou art. — Off, off, you lendings: — Come, un-  
button here. — [*Tearing off his Clothes.*]

*Fool.* 'Pr'ythee, nuncle, be contented; this is 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 of his body cold. — Look, here  
comes a walking fire.

*Edg.* This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he  
begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he  
gives the web and the pen, <sup>19)</sup> squints the eye, and  
makes the hare-lip; mildews the white wheat, and  
hurts the poor creature of earth.

*Saint Withold* <sup>20)</sup> footed thrice the wold;  
He met the night-mare, and her nine-fold;  
*Bid her alight,  
And her troth plight,  
And, aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!*

*Kent.* How fares your grace?

*Enter GLOSTER, with a Torch.*

*Lear.* What's he?  
*Kent.* Who's there? What is't you seek?  
*Glo.* What are you there? Your names?

*Edg.* Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the  
toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water; <sup>21)</sup>  
that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend  
rages, eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old  
rat, and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of  
the standing pool; who is whipped from tything to  
tything, <sup>22)</sup> and stocked, punished, and imprisoned;  
who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to  
his body, horse to ride, and weapon to wear, —

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

Beware my follower: — Peace, Smolkin; peace, thou  
fiend!



*Glo.* What, hath your grace no better company?  
*Edg.* The prince of darkness is a gentleman;  
Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.<sup>23)</sup>

*Glo.* Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile,  
That it doth hate what gets it.  
*Edg.* Poor Tom's a-cold.

*Glo.* Go in with me; my duty cannot suffer  
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands:  
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,  
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you;  
Yet have I 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 the 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.* Impórtune him once more to go, my lord,  
His wits begin to unsettle.

*Glo.* Canst thou blame him?  
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,

[*Storm continues.*]

The grief has craz'd my wits. What a night's this!  
I do beseech your grace.—

*Lear.* O, cry you mercy,  
Noble philosopher, your company.

*Edg.* Tom's a-cold.

*Glo.* In, fellow, there, to the 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, sooth him; let him take the  
fellow.

*Glo.* Take him you on.

*Kent.* Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

*Lear.* Come, good Athenian.

*Glo.* No words, no words:  
Hush.

*Edg.* Child Rowland<sup>24)</sup> to the dark tower came,  
His word was still, — *Fie, foh, and fum,*  
*I smell the blood of a British man.* [*Exit.*]

## SCENE V.

*A Room in Gloster'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 a-work 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 ad-  
vantages 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  
Gloster. 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 per-  
severe 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. [*Exit.*]

## SCENE VI.

*A Chamber in a Farm-House, adjoining the  
Castle.*

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

*Glo.* 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 has given way  
to his impatience.— The gods reward your kind-  
ness! [*Exit GLOSTER.*]

*Edg.* Frateretto calls me; and tells me, Nero is  
an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, inno-  
cent,<sup>25)</sup> and beware the foul fiend.

*Fool.* 'Pr'ythee, 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 hizzing<sup>26)</sup> in upon them:—

*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:—  
Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer:—

[*To EDGAR.*]

Thou, sapient sir, sit here. [*To the Fool.*]— Now,  
you she-foxes!—

*Edg.* Look, where he stands and glares!—  
Wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?

*Fool.* Come o'er the bourn,<sup>27)</sup> Bessy, to me:—

*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. *Hopdance* cries in Tom's belly  
for two white herring. Croak not, black angel; I  
have no food for thee.

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

*Lear.* I'll see their trial first:— Bring in the evi-  
dence.—

Thou robed man of justice, take thy place;—

[*To EDGAR.*]

And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, [*To the Fool.*]  
Bench by his side:— You are of the commission,  
Sit you too. [*To KENT.*]

*Edg.* Let us deal justly.

*Sleepest, or wakest thou, jolly shephér?*

*Thy sheep be in the corn;*

*And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,  
Thy sheep shall take no harm.*

Pur! the cat is grey.

*Lear.* Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take

my oath before this honourable assembly, she kicked  
the poor king her father.

*Fool.* Come hither, mistress; Is your name Goneril?

*Lear.* She cannot deny it.

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

*Lear.* And here's another, whose warp'd looks pro-  
claim

What store her heart is made of.— 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.* My tears begin to take his part so much,  
They'll mar my counterfeiting. [*Aside.*]

*Lear.* The little dogs and all,  
Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, 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, grey-hound, mongrel grim,  
Hound, or spaniel, brach, or lym;<sup>28)</sup>  
Or bobtail tike, 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 anatomise Regan, see what  
breeds about her heart: Is there any cause in na-  
ture, that makes these hard hearts?— You, sir, I  
entertain you for one of my hundred; only, I do  
not like the fashion of your garments: you will say,  
they are Persian attire;<sup>29)</sup> but let them be changed.

[*To EDGAR.*]

*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'the  
morning: So, so, so.

*Fool.* And I'll go to bed at noon.

## Re-enter GLOSTER.

*Glo.* Come hither, friend: Where is the king my  
master?

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

*Glo.* Good friend, I pr'ythee, take him in thy arms;  
I have o'er-heard 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 should'st 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.* Oppress'd nature sleeps:—  
This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses,  
Which, if convenience will not allow,  
Stand in hard cure. Come, help to bear thy master;

Thou must not stay behind. [*To the Fool.*]

*Glo.* Come, come, away.

[*Exit KENT, GLOSTER, and the Fool,  
bearing off the King.*]

*Edg.* When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.  
Who alone suffers, suffers most i'the mind;  
Leaving free things,<sup>30)</sup> 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 father'd!— Tom, away:  
Mark the high noises;<sup>31)</sup> and thyself bewray,<sup>32)</sup>  
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.

*A Room in Gloster's Castle.*

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

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

[*Exit 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;— fare-  
well, my lord of Gloster.<sup>33)</sup>

## Enter Steward.

How now? Where's the king?

*Stew.* My lord of Gloster hath convey'd him hence:  
Some five or six and thirty of his knights,  
Hot questrists after him,<sup>34)</sup> 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.  
[*Exit GONERIL and EDMUND.*]

*Corn.* Edmund, farewell.— Go, seek the traitor  
Gloster,  
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us:

[*Exit other Servants.*]

Though well we may not pass upon his life  
Without the form of justice; yet our power  
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath,<sup>35)</sup> which men  
May blame, but not control. Who's there? The  
traitor?

## Re-enter Servants with GLOSTER.

*Reg.* Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

*Corn.* Bind fast his corky arms.<sup>36)</sup>

*Glo.* 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!

*Glo.* Unmerciful lady as you are, I am none.

*Corn.* To this chair bind him:— Villain, thou shalt  
find — [*REGAN plucks his Beard.*]

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

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

These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,  
Will quicken,<sup>37)</sup> and accuse thee: I am your host;  
With robbers' hands, my hospitable favours<sup>38)</sup>  
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.

*Glo.* 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?

*Glo.* To Dover.

*Reg.* Wherefore  
To Dover? Wast thou not charg'd at thy peril — <sup>39)</sup>

*Corn.* Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

*Glo.* I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course. <sup>40)</sup>

*Reg.* Wherefore to Dover?

*Glo.* 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 stelled fires: yet, poor old heart, He holp'd the heavens to rain.

If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time, Thou should'st have said, *Good porter, turn the key;* All cruels else subscrib'd: — <sup>41)</sup> But I shall see The winged vengeance overtake such children.

*Corn.* See it shalt thou never: — Fellows, hold the chair: —

Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

[*GLOSTER is held down in his Chair, while CORNWALL plucks out one of his Eyes, and sets his Foot on it.*]

*Glo.* 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; the other too.

*Corn.* If you see vengeance, —

*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?

*Serv.* If you did wear a beard upon your chin, I'd shake it on this quarrel: What do you mean?

*Corn.* My villain! [Draws, and runs at him.]

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

[Draws. They fight. CORNWALL is wounded.]

*Reg.* Give me thy sword. — [To another Servant.] A peasant stand up thus!

[Snatches a Sword, comes behind, and stabs him.]

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

To see some mischief on him: O! [Dies.]  
*Corn.* Lest it see more, prevent it: — Out, vile jelly! Where is thy lustre now?

[Tears out *GLOSTER's* other Eye, and throws it on the ground.]

*Glo.* 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 <sup>42)</sup> to us; Who is too good to pity thee.

*Glo.* 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. — 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 come this hurt: give me your arm,

[Exit CORNWALL, led by REGAN; — Servants unbind *GLOSTER*, and lead him out.]

1 *Serv.* I'll never care what wickedness I do,

If this man come to good.

2 *Serv.* If she live long, And, in the end, meet the old course of death, <sup>43)</sup> Women will all turn monsters.

1 *Serv.* Let's follow the old earl, and get the bedlam To lead him where he would; his roguish madness Allows itself to any thing.

2 *Serv.* Go thou; I'll fetch some flax, and whites of eggs,

To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him! [Exit severally.]

## 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. — But who comes here? —

Enter *GLOSTER*, led by an old Man.

My father, poorly led? — World, world, O world! But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee, <sup>1)</sup> 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.

*Glo.* Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone: Thy comforts can do me no good at all.

Thee they may hurt.

*Old Man.* Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

*Glo.* I have no way, and therefore want no eyes; I stumbled when I saw: Full oft 'tis seen,

Our mean secures us; <sup>2)</sup> 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?

*Glo.* Is it a beggar-man?

*Old Man.* Madman and beggar too.

*Glo.* 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 the gods; They kill us for their sport.

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

*Glo.* Is that the naked fellow?

*Old Man.* Ay, my lord.

*Glo.* Then 'pr'ythee, get thee gone: If, for my sake, Thou wilt o'er take us, hence a mile or twain, I'the way to Dover, do it for ancient love; And bring some covering for this naked soul, Whom I'll entreat to lead me.

*Old Man.* Alack, sir, he's mad.

*Glo.* 'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind.

Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure; Above the rest, be gone.

*Old Man.* I'll bring him the best 'parrel that I have, Come on't what will. [Exit.]

*Glo.* Sirrah, naked fellow.

*Edg.* Poor Tom's a-cold. — I cannot daub <sup>3)</sup> it further. [Aside.]

*Glo.* Come hither, fellow.

*Edg.* [Aside.] And yet I must. — Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

*Glo.* Know'st thou the way to Dover?

*Edg.* Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path. Poor Tom hath been scar'd out of his good wits: Bless the good man from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; of lust, as *Obidicut!* *Hobbiidance*, prince of dumbness; *Mahu*, of stealing; *Modo*, of murder; and *Flibbertigibbet*, of mopping and mowing; who since possesses chamber-maids and waiting-women. So, bless thee, master!

*Glo.* Here, take this purse, thou whom the heaven's 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, <sup>4)</sup> that will not see Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly; So distribution should undo excess, And each man have enough. — Dost thou know Dover?

*Edg.* Ay, master.

*Glo.* 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. [Exit.]

## SCENE II.

Before the Duke of Albany's Palace.

Enter GONERIL and EDMUND; Steward meeting them.

*Gon.* Welcome, my lord: I marvel, our mild husband Not met us on the way: — Now, where's your master?  
*Stew.* 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 *Gloster'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.* Then shall you go no further. [To EDMUND.]

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. <sup>5)</sup> Back, Edmund, to my brother; Hasten his musters, and conduct his powers: I must change arms at home, and give the distaff Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear, If you dare venture in your own behalf, A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech; [Giving a Favour.]

Decline your head: <sup>6)</sup> 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.

*Gon.* My most dear *Gloster!* [Exit EDMUND.]

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

*Stew.* Madam, here comes my lord. [Exit Steward.]

Enter ALBANY.

*Gon.* I have been worth the whistle. <sup>7)</sup>  
*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 border'd certain in itself; She that herself will sliver and disbranch From her material sap, <sup>8)</sup> 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 the head-lugg'd bear would lick, Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you maddened. Could my good brother suffer you to do it? A man, a prince, by him so benefited? If that the heavens do not their visible spirits Send quickly down to tame these vile offences, 'Twill 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 slayer begins threats; Whilst thou, a moral fool, sit'st still, and cry'st, *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,

Be-monster not thy feature. Were it 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 now! —



Enter a Messenger.

Alb. What news?

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

Alb. Gloster's eyes!

Mess. 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:<sup>9)</sup> 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 Gloster! Lost he his other eye!

Mess. 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 Gloster 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.

Alb. Where was his son, when they did take his eyes?

Mess. Come with my lady hither.

Alb. He is not here.

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

Alb. Knows he the wickedness?

Mess. 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. Gloster, 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 knowest. [*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 requir'd, And necessary.

Kent. Who hath he left behind him general?

Gent. The Mareschal of France, Monsieur le Fer.

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 thrill'd down Her delicate cheek: it seem'd, she was a queen Over her passion; who, most rebel-like, Sought to be the 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 day:<sup>10)</sup> Those happy smiles, 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 below'd, if all Could so become it.

Kent. Made she no verbal question?<sup>11)</sup> 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? 't the storm? 't the night?*

Let pity not be believed!<sup>12)</sup> There she shook The holy water from her heavenly eyes, And clamour moisten'd: —<sup>13)</sup> then away she started To deal with grief alone.

Kent. It is the stars, The stars above us, govern our conditions;<sup>14)</sup> 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 distress'd Lear is i'the 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<sup>15)</sup> 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 same. A Tent.

Enter CORDELIA, Physician, 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,<sup>16)</sup> and furrow weeds, With harlocks,<sup>17)</sup> hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers, Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow In our sustaining corn. — A century send forth; Search every acre in the high grown field, And bring him to our eye. — [*Exit an Officer.*] — What can man's wisdom do,

In the restoring his bereaved sense?

He, that helps him, take all my outward worth.

Phy. 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 bless'd 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.<sup>18)</sup>

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. Madam, news; The British powers 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<sup>19)</sup> tears hath pitied. No blown ambition<sup>20)</sup> 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.

A Room in Gloster's Castle.

Enter REGAN, and Steward.

Reg. But are my brother's powers set forth?

Stew. Ay, madam.

Reg. In person there?

Stew. Madam, with much ado:

Your sister is the better soldier.

Reg. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

Stew. No, madam.

Reg. What might import my sister's letter to him?

Stew. I know not, lady.

Reg. Faith he is posted hence on serious matter. It was great ignorance, Gloster'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 despatch His nighted life;<sup>21)</sup> moreover, to decry The strength o'the enemy.

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

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

Stew. 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.

Stew. 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 o'liads,<sup>22)</sup> and most speaking looks To noble Edmund: I know, you are of her bosom.

Stew. I, madam?

Reg. I speak in understanding; you are, I know it: Therefore, I do advise you, take this note:<sup>23)</sup> My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd; And more convenient is he for my hand, Than for your lady's: — You may gather more. If you do find him, pray you, give him this; And when your mistress hears thus much from you, I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her. So, fare you well.

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

Stew. 'Would I could meet him, madam! I would show

What party I do follow.

Reg. Fare thee well. [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE VI.

The Country near Dover.

Enter GLOSTER, and EDGAR, dressed like a Peasant.

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

Edg. You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

Glo. Methinks, the ground is even.

Edg. Horrible steep: Hark, do you hear the sea?

Glo. No, truly.

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

Glo. So may it be, indeed: Methinks, thy voice is alter'd; and thou speak'st In better phrase, and matter, than thou didst.

Edg. You are much deceiv'd; in nothing am I chang'd, But in my garments.

Glo. Methinks, you 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: Half way down Hangs one that gathers samphire: dreadful trade! Methinks, he seems no bigger than his head:

The fishermen, that walk upon the beach, Appear like mice; and yon' tall anchoring bark, Diminish'd to her cock;<sup>24)</sup> her cock, a buoy Almost too small for sight: The murmuring surge, That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes, Cannot be heard so high: — I'll look no more; Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight Topple down headlong.

Glo. Set me where you stand.

Edg. Give me your hand: You are now within a foot

Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon

Would I not leap upright.

Glo. 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 you well, good sir. [*Seems to go.*]

Glo. With all my heart.

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

Glo. O you mighty gods!

This world I do renounce; and, in your sights, Shake patiently my great affliction off: If I could bear it longer, and not fall To quarrel with your great opposeless wills, My snuff, and loathed part of nature, should Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him! — Now, fellow, fare thee well.

[*He leaps, and falls along.*]

Edg. Gone, sir? farewell. —

And yet I know not how conceit may rob The treasury of life, when life itself Yields to the theft:<sup>25)</sup> 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: —<sup>26)</sup> Yet he revives: What are you, sir?

Glo. Away, and let me die.

Edg. Had'st thou been aught but gossamer,<sup>27)</sup> feathers, air,

So many fathom down precipitating,

Thou had'st shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;

Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art sound.

Ten masts at each make not the altitude,

Which thou hast perpendicularly fell;

Thy life's a miracle: Speak yet again.

Glo. But have I fallen, or no?

Edg. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn:<sup>28)</sup>

Look up a-height; — the shrill-gorg'd lark so far

Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.



*Glo.* 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.

*Glo.* Too well, too well.  
*Edg.* This is above all strangeness.  
Upon the crown o'the cliff, what thing was that  
Which parted from you?

*Glo.* 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, <sup>29)</sup> and wav'd like the enridged sea;  
It was some fiend: Therefore, thou happy father,  
Think that the clearest gods, <sup>30)</sup> who make them  
honours

Of men's impossibilities, have preserv'd thee.  
*Glo.* 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. — But who comes here?

*Enter LEAR, fantastically dressed up with Flowers.*

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

*Lear.* No, they cannot touch me for coining; 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: <sup>31)</sup> 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. — <sup>32)</sup> O, well-flown, bird! — i'the clout, <sup>33)</sup>  
i'the clout: hewgh! — Give the word.

*Edg.* Sweet marjoram.  
*Lear.* Pass.

*Glo.* 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 every thing 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 them, there I smelt them  
out. Go to, they are not men o'their words: they  
told me I was every thing; 'tis a lie; I am not  
ague-proof.

*Glo.* The trick of that voice <sup>34)</sup> I do well re-  
member:  
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 Gloster'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 yon' simpering 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 <sup>35)</sup> do the gods inherit,  
Beneath is all the fiends'; there's hell, there's dark-  
ness, there is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding,  
stench, consumption; — Fye, fye, fye! pah, pah!  
Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,  
to sweeten my imagination: there's money for thee.

*Glo.* O, let me kiss that hand!  
*Lear.* Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.  
*Glo.* O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world  
Shall so wear out to nought. — Dost thou know me?  
*Lear.* I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost  
thou squiny at me? <sup>36)</sup> No, do thy worst, blind  
Cupid; I'll not love. — Read thou this challenge;  
mark but the penning of it.

*Glo.* Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.  
*Edg.* I would not take this from report; — it is,  
And my heart breaks at it.

*Lear.* Read.  
*Glo.* 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.

*Glo.* I see it feelingly.

*Lear.* What, art mad? A man may see how this  
world goes, with no eyes. Look with thine ears:  
see how yon' justice rails upon yon' 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?

*Glo.* *Ay*, sir.

*Lear.* And the creature run from the cur?  
There thou might'st behold the great image of au-  
thority; a dog's obeyed in office. —

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand:  
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own  
back;

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind  
For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs  
the cozener.

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;  
Robes, and furr'd gowns, hide all. Plate sin with  
gold,

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it.  
None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em: <sup>37)</sup>

Take that of me, my friend, who have the power  
To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes;  
And, like a scurvy politician, seem

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

Pull off my boots: — Harder, harder; so.  
*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 Gloster:  
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 me.

*Glo.* 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 it in proof;  
And when I have stolen upon these sons-in-law,  
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill.

*Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants.*

*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 ransome. Let me have a surgeon,  
I am cut to the brains.

*Gent.* You shall have any thing.  
*Lear.* No seconds? All myself?

Why, this would make a man, a man of salt, <sup>38)</sup>  
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,  
*Ay*, and for laying autumn's dust.

*Gent.* Good sir, —

*Lear.* I will die bravely, like a 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 it. <sup>39)</sup> Nay, an you get  
it, you shall get it by running. *Sa, sa, sa, sa.*

*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. <sup>40)</sup>

*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 Gent.*]

*Glo.* You ever gentle gods, take my breath from me;  
Let not my worser spirit <sup>41)</sup> tempt me again  
To die before you please!

*Edg.* Well pray you, father.

*Glo.* Now, good sir, what are you?

*Edg.* A most poor man, made tame <sup>42)</sup> by for-  
tune's blows;

Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,  
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,  
I'll lead you to some biding.

*Glo.* Hearty thanks:

The bounty and the benison of heaven

To boot, and boot!

*Enter Steward.*

*Stew.* 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: — <sup>43)</sup> The sword is out  
That must destroy thee.

*Glo.* Now let thy friendly hand  
Put strength enough to it. [*EDGAR opposes.*]

*Stew.* Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Dar'st thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence;

Lest that the infection of his fortune take  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

*Edg.* Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

*Stew.* Let go, slave, or thou diest.

*Edg.* Good gentleman, go your gait, <sup>44)</sup> and let  
poor volk pass. And ch'ud ha' been zwagger'd out  
of my life, 'twould not ha' been zo long as 'tis by  
a vortnight. Nay, come not near the old man; keep  
out, che vor'ye, <sup>45)</sup> or ise try whether your costard <sup>46)</sup>

or my bat <sup>47)</sup> be the harder: Ch'll be plain with  
you.

*Stew.* Out, dunghill!

*Edg.* Ch'll pick your teeth, zir: Come; no matter  
vor your foins. <sup>48)</sup>

[*They fight; and EDGAR knocks him down.*]

*Stew.* 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 Gloster; seek him out  
Upon the British party: — — O, untimely death!

[*Dies.*]

*Edg.* I know thee well: A serviceable villain;  
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress,  
As badness would desire.

*Glo.* 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 death's man. — Let us see: —

Leave, gentle wax: and, manners, blame us not:  
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;  
Their papers, is more lawful.

[*Reads.*] *Let our reciprocal vows be remembered.*

*You have many opportunities to cut him off: if  
your will want not, time and place will be fruit-  
fully offered. There is nothing done, if he return  
the conqueror: Then am I the prisoner, and his  
bed my gaol; from the loathed warmth whereof  
deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.*

*Your wife, (so I would say,) and your  
affectionate servant,*

GONERIL.

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will! — <sup>49)</sup>  
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 <sup>50)</sup>  
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.

[*Exit EDGAR, dragging out the Body.*]

*Glo.* 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.

*Re-enter EDGAR.*

*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. LEAR on a Bed,*

*asleep; Physician, Gentleman, and others,  
attending: Enter CORDELIA and KENT.*

*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'er-paid.  
All my reports go with the modest truth;  
No more, nor clipp'd, but so.

*Cor.* Be better suited: <sup>51)</sup>  
These weeds are memories <sup>52)</sup> of those worsor hours;  
I prythee, put them off.



*Kent.* Pardon me, dear madam; Yet to be known, shortens my made intent: <sup>53</sup>) My boon I make it, that you know me not, Till time and I think meet.

*Cor.* Then be it so, my good lord. — How does the king? [To the Physician.]

*Phys.* Madam, sleeps still.

*Cor.* O you kind gods, Cure this great breach in his abused nature! The untun'd and jarring senses, O, wind up Of this child-changed father! <sup>54</sup>)

*Phys.* So please your majesty, That we may wake the king? he hath slept long.

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

*Gent.* Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep, We put fresh garments on him.

*Phys.* Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;

I doubt not of his temperance.

*Cor.* Very well.

*Phys.* 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 expos'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? <sup>55</sup>) 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.

*Phys.* 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'the grave: — Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears Do scald like molten lead.

*Cor.* Sir, do you know me?

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

*Cor.* Still, still, far wide!

*Phys.* He's scarce awake; let him alone awhile.

*Lear.* Where have I been? Where am I? — Fair day-light? — I am mightily abus'd. — I should even 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; 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.

*Phys.* Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,

You see, is cur'd in him; and yet it is danger To make him even o'er the time he has lost. <sup>56</sup>) 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 now, forget and forgive: I am old, and foolish.

[*Exeunt LEAR, CORDELIA, Physician, and Attendants.*]

*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 Gloster.

*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 o'the kingdom Approach apace.

*Gent.* The arbitrement is like to be a bloody.

Fare you well, sir. [*Exit.*]

*Kent.* My point and period will be throughly wrought,

Or well, or ill, as this day's battle's fought. [*Exit.*]

## A C T V.

## SCENE I. The Camp of the British Forces, near Dover.

Enter, with Drums and Colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Officers, Soldiers, and others.

*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. <sup>1</sup>)

[*To an Officer, who goes out.*]

*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 forefended place? <sup>2</sup>)

*Edm.* That thought abuses you. <sup>3</sup>)

*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, —

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Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, and Soldiers.

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

*Alb.* Our very loving sister, well be met. — Sir, this I hear, — The king is come to his daughter, With others, whom the rigour of our state 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; <sup>4</sup>) with others, whom, I fear, Most just and heavy causes make oppose. <sup>5</sup>)

*Edm.* Sir, you speak nobly. <sup>6</sup>)

*Reg.* Why is this reason'd? 'Gainst the enemy: For these domestic and particular broils Are not to question here.

*Alb.* Let us then determine With the ancient of war on our proceedings.

*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.* O, ho, I know the riddle: [*aside*] 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 EDMUND, REGAN, GONERIL, Officers, Soldiers, and Attendants.*]

*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. <sup>7</sup>) 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. [*Exit.*]

*Alb.* Why, fare thee well; I will o'erlook thy paper.

Re-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. <sup>8</sup>) [*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, <sup>9</sup>) 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, LEAR, CORDELIA, and their Forces; and exeunt.

Enter EDGAR and GLOSTER.

*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.

*Glo.* Grace go with you, sir!

[*Exit EDGAR.*]

Alarums; afterwards a Retreat. Re-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.

*Glo.* 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: <sup>10</sup>) Come on.

*Glo.* 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; Officers, Soldiers, &c.

*Edm.* Some officers take them away: good guard; Until their greater pleasures first be known That are to censure them. <sup>11</sup>)

*Cor.* We are not the first, Who, with best meaning, have incur'd the worst. For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down; Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown. — Shall we not see these daughters, and these sisters?

*Lear.* No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison: We too alone will sing like birds i'the cage: When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down, And ask of thee forgiveness: So we'll live, And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too, — Who loses, and who wins; who's in, who's out; — And take upon us the mystery of things, As if we were God's spies: And we'll wear out, In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones, That ebb and flow by the moon.

*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 goujeers <sup>12</sup>) shall devour them, flesh and fell, <sup>13</sup>) Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see them starve first.

Come. [*Exeunt LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded.*]

*Edm.* Come hither, captain; hark. Take thou this note; [*giving 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; <sup>14</sup>) either say, thou'lt do't, Or thrive by other means.

*Off.* I'll do't, my lord.

*Edm.* About it; and write happy, when thou hast done.

Mark, — I say instantly; and carry it so, As I have set it down.

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

[*Exit Officer.*]

ERRIV.



*Flourish.* Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, Officers, and Attendants.

*Alb.* Sir, you have shown 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<sup>15</sup>) Which do command them. With him I sent the queen;

My reason all the same; and they are ready To-morrow, or at further space, to appear Where you shall hold your session. At this time, We sweat, and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend; And the best quarrels, in the heat, are curs'd By those that feel their sharpness: — The question of Cordelia, and her father, Requires a fitter place.<sup>16</sup>)

*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<sup>17</sup>) 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 advancement.

*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 a-squint.

*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.<sup>18</sup>)

*Edm.* Nor in thine, lord.

*Alb.* Half-blooded fellow, yes.

*Reg.* Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine.

[To EDMUND.]

*Alb.* Stay yet; hear reason: — Edmund, I arrest thee On capital treason; and, in thy arrest, This gilded serpent: [pointing to GON.] — for your claim, fair sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife; 'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord, And I, her husband, contradict your bans. If you will marry, make your love to me, My lady is bespoken.

*Gon.* An interlude!

*Alb.* Thou art arm'd, Gloster: — Let the trumpet sound:

If none appear to prove upon thy person, Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons, There is my pledge; [throwing down a Glove] I'll prove it on thy heart,

Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

*Reg.* Sick, O sick!  
*Gon.* If not, I'll ne'er trust poison. [Aside.]  
*Edm.* There's my exchange: [throwing down a Glove] what in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies: Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach, On him, on you, (who not?) I will maintain My truth and honour firmly.

*Alb.* A herald, ho!  
*Edm.* A herald, ho, a herald!

*Alb.* Trust to thy single virtue;<sup>19</sup>) for thy soldiers, All levied in my name, have in my name Took their discharge.

*Reg.* This sickness grows upon me.

Enter a Herald.

*Alb.* She is not well; convey her to my tent.

[Exit REGAN, led.]  
Come hither, herald. — Let the trumpet sound, — And read out this.

*Off.* Sound, trumpet. [A Trumpet sounds.]

Herald reads.

If any man of quality, or degree, within the lists of the army, will maintain upon Edmund, supposed earl of Gloster, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear at the third sound of the trumpet: He is bold in his defence.

*Edm.* Sound. [1 Trumpet.]

*Her.* Again. [2 Trumpet.]

*Her.* Again. [3 Trumpet.]

[Trumpet answers within.]

Enter EDGAR, armed, preceded by a Trumpet.

*Alb.* Ask him his purposes, why he appears Upon this call o'the 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 withal.

*Alb.* Which is that adversary?

*Edg.* What's he, that speaks for Edmund earl of Gloster?

*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;<sup>20</sup>) 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 the extremest upward of thy head, To the descent and dust beneath thy feet, 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,<sup>21</sup>)

What safe and nicely I might well delay By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn: Back do I toss these treasons to thy head: With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart; Which, (for they yet glance by, and scarcely bruise,)

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This sword of mine shall give them instant way, Where they shall rest for ever. —<sup>22</sup>) Trumpets, speak.

[Alarums. They fight. EDMUND falls.]

*Alb.* O save him, save him!

*Gon.* This is mere practice, Gloster: By the 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: — Hold, sir: — Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil: — No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.

[Gives the Letter to EDMUND.]

*Gon.* Say, if I do: the laws are mine, not thine: Who shall arraign me for't?

*Alb.* Most monstrous! Know'st thou this paper?

*Gon.* Ask me not what I know.

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

[To an Officer, who goes out.]

*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 art noble, I do forgive thee.

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

*Edm.* Thou 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 it well.<sup>23</sup>)

*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 we'd hourly die, Rather than die at once!) taught me to shift Into a mad-man's rags; to assume a semblance That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit Met I my father with his bleeding rings, Their precious stones new lost; became his guide, Led him, begg'd for him, 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.<sup>24</sup>) 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 fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father:<sup>25</sup>) 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 trumpet sounded, And there I left him tranc'd.

*Alb.* But who was this?

*Edg.* Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service Improper for a slave.

Enter a Gentleman hastily, 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 —

*Alb.* Who, man? speak.

*Gent.* Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister By her is poison'd; she confesses it.<sup>26</sup>)

*Edm.* I was contracted to them both; all three Now marry in an instant.

*Alb.* Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead! — This judgment<sup>27</sup>) of the heavens, that makes us tremble, Touches us not with pity. [Exit Gentleman.]

Enter KENT.

*Edg.* Here comes Kent, sir.

*Alb.* O! it is he. The time will not allow the compliment, Which very manners urges.

*Kent.* I am come To bid my king and master aye good night; Is he not here?

*Alb.* Great thing of us forgot! — Speak, Edmund, where's the king; and where's Cordelia?

*See'st thou this object, Kent?*

[The Bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in.]

*Kent.* Alack, why thus?

*Edm.* Yet Edmund was belov'd: The one the other poison'd 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 it, — 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 whom, 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.<sup>28</sup>)

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

Enter LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR, Officer, and others.

*Lear.* Howl, howl, howl, howl! — O, you are men of stones;

XXXIV.



Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack: — O, she is 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? <sup>29)</sup>

*Alb.* Fall, and cease! <sup>30)</sup>

*Lear.* This feather stirs; she lives! if it be so,  
It is a chance that does redeem all sorrows  
That ever I have felt.

*Kent.* O my good master! [*Kneeling.*

*Lear.* Pr'ythee, 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.

*Off.* 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

*Lear.* Did I not, fellow?

I have seen the day, with my good biting faulchion  
I would have made them skip: I am old now,  
And these same crosses spoil me. — Who are you?  
Mine eyes are none o'the best: — I'll tell you straight.

*Kent.* If fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,  
One of them we behold. <sup>31)</sup>

*Lear.* This is 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, <sup>32)</sup>  
Have follow'd your sad steps.

*Lear.* You are welcome hither.

*Kent.* Nor no man else; <sup>33)</sup> all's cheerless, dark,  
and deadly. —

Your eldest daughters have fore-doom'd themselves,  
And desperately are dead.

*Lear.* Ay, so I think.

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

*Edg.* Very bootless.

*Enter an Officer.*

*Off.* 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, <sup>34)</sup>

Shall be applied: For us, we will resign,

During the life of this old majesty,

To him our absolute power: — You, to your rights;

[*To EDGAR and KENT.*

With boot, <sup>35)</sup> 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! <sup>36)</sup> No, no, no life:

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,

And thou no breath at all? O, thou wilt come no more,

Never, never, never, never, never! —

Pray you, undo this button: <sup>37)</sup> 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 pr'ythee, 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.* O, 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. Friends of my soul, you twain

[*To KENT and EDGAR.*

Rule in this realm, and the gor'd state sustain.

*Kent.* I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;

My master calls, and 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 hath borne most: we, that are young,

Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

[*Exeunt, with a Dead March.*