

# William Shakespeare: King Lear

## ACT I

*Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND*

The Duke of Gloucester introduces his illegitimate bastard (“natural child”) Edmund to the Duke of Kent, boasting of the natural energy that he put into begtting him, although at the time he was already married with a son, Edgar, born a year before.

*Enter KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and Attendants*

King Lear, feeling old, is preparing to divide his kingdom between his 3 daughters “while we Unburthen'd crawl toward death.” His elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, are married to the dukes of Albany and Cornwall. The “princes” (rulers) of France and Burgunday have come, both wishing to marry Cordelia, his youngest, but Lear makes them wait while he distributes the country on the basis of a competition: “Which of you shall we say doth love us most?” Goneril and Regan make elaborate speeches devoid of sincerity, which please Lear, while Cordelia frets. Then Lear turns to her, expecting more of the same:

Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least; to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

**CORDELIA**

Nothing, my lord.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing!

**CORDELIA**

Nothing.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

**CORDELIA**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**CORDELIA**

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

**KING LEAR**

But goes thy heart with this?

**CORDELIA**

Ay, good my lord.

**KING LEAR**

So young, and so untender?

**CORDELIA**

So young, my lord, and true.

**KING LEAR**

Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,

The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;

By all the operation of the orbs

From whom we do exist, and cease to be;

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,

Propinquity and property of blood,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee, from this, for ever. The barbarous Scythian,

Or he that makes his generation messes

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom

Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and relieved,

As thou my sometime daughter.

Instead, he divides the nation between Cornwall and Albany (men dispose of their wives' estates), and says he will stay with each in turn, one month at a time, accompanied by a retinue of 100 knights. Kent protests: "Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least" and Lear in fury immediately banishes him. Kent expresses his support for Cordelia, his scepticism as to the "love" of the two other daughters, and leaves.

Burgundy, learning that Cordelia has been disinherited and has no dowry or lands, is no longer interested in marrying her. France is different: "Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor; Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised! Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon." As she is leaving, Cordelia foresees what will happen, and urges her sisters to be kind to their father but her sisters scorn her. As soon as she has left, Goneril and Regan start to complain about their father's erratic behavior:

*Enter EDMUND, with a letter (preparing to deceive his father, Gloucester)*

**EDMUND**

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law

My services are bound. Wherefore should I

Stand in the plague of custom, and permit

The curiosity of nations to deprive me,

For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines

Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?

When my dimensions are as well compact,

My mind as generous, and my shape as true,

As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us

With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?

Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take

More composition and fierce quality

Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,

Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,

Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well, then,

Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:

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

Enter GLOUCESTER. Edmund shows him a (forged) letter where Edgar seems to say that they should kill their father and share his land. Edmund manipulates his father, pretending to be shocked. Gloucester sees a cosmic pattern of growing discord which Edmund then mocks.

Edgar comes in, Edmund tell him that their father is very angry with him, that he should hide (which will prevent Edgar from telling Gloucester that the letter is a forgery, of course). Edmund admires his own skill in deceiving:

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

Time has passed, Lear is staying with Goneril, who is complaining about the way he still acts as though he had power and spending his time enjoying himself with his 100 knights. She tells her steward Oswald to ignore Lear's orders and treat the knights badly. "If he dislike it, let him to our sister, Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one, Not to be over-ruled. Idle old man, that still would manage those authorities that he hath given away!

*Enter KENT, disguised.* Kent is resolved to stay close to Lear, as a loyal servant, to protect him and has disguised himself as a poor serf, speaking roughly. Lear likes him. When Lear gives orders to Oswald, he is ignored, Goneril refuses to come when he summons her. Oswald is rude to Lear, Kent punishes him. *Enter Fool.* The Fool, we know, has been upset by Cordelia's rejection and departure. He is authorized to comment frankly on Lear's actions in joking. The theme "Nothing" returns:

**KENT**

This is nothing, fool.

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**Fool**

[To KENT] Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool. Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie.

**KING LEAR**

An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped.

**Fool**

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

*Enter GONERIL*

**KING LEAR**

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

**Fool**

Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O  
without a figure: I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing.

Goneril reproaches Lear, who is shocked to realize that she does not respect him.

**KING LEAR**

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

When she asks him to reduce the number of his retinue, he grows angry and says he will leave her  
house and go to Regan.

**KING LEAR**

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

**GONERIL**

You strike my people; and your disorder'd rabble  
Make servants of their betters.

**KING LEAR**

Woe, that too late repents,--

*Enter ALBANY*

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

**ALBANY**

Pray, sir, be patient.

**KING LEAR**

[To GONERIL] Detested kite! thou liest.  
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
That all particulars of duty know,  
And in the most exact regard support  
The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
That, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature  
From the fix'd place; drew from 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.

**ALBANY**

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

**KING LEAR**

It may be so, my lord.  
Hear, nature, hear; dear goddess, hear!  
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend  
To make this creature fruitful!  
Into her womb convey sterility!  
Dry up in her the organs of increase;  
And from her derogate body never spring  
A babe to honour her! If she must teem,  
Create her child of spleen; that it may live,  
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!  
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;  
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;  
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel  
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child! Away, away!

*Exit.*

*Re-enter KING LEAR:* "What, fifty of my followers at a clap! Within a fortnight!" (Not explained, apparently his retinue has been reduced)

*To GONERIL* (Lear begins to lose control of his feelings, weeps)

**KING LEAR**

Life and death! I am ashamed  
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus;  
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,  
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!  
The untented woundings of a father's curse  
Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,  
Bewep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,  
And cast you, with the waters that you lose,  
To temper clay. Yea, it is come to this?  
Let it be so: yet have I left a daughter,  
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:  
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails  
She'll flay thy wolvisish visage. Thou shalt find  
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think  
I have cast off for ever: thou shalt,  
I warrant thee.

*Exeunt KING LEAR, KENT, and Attendants*

*OSWALD* is to take a letter to Regan warning her of what has happened. (We begin to sense that Goneril despises her kind-hearted husband.)

## **SCENE V. Court before the same.**

*Enter KING LEAR, KENT, and Fool* Lear sends the disguised Kent to prepare Regan for his coming (she seems to be living in Gloucester or near Gloucester's house)

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

No.

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

I did her wrong--

**Fool**

Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

**KING LEAR**

No.

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

Why?

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

Because they are not eight?

**Fool**

Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool.

**KING LEAR**

To take 't again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

How's that?

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven

Keep me in temper: I would not be mad!

*Exeunt*

## **ACT II**

### **SCENE I. GLOUCESTER's castle.**

*Enter EDMUND* Learning that the Duke of Cornwall (the effective king of the area) is coming, he moves to get rid of Edgar, telling him that his life is in danger. Then he cuts his own arm and says that Edgar tried to kill him, and wants to kill Gloucester. Gloucester believes his lies.

All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;  
The duke must grant me that: besides, his picture  
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom  
May have the due note of him; and of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee capable.

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, and Attendants* They have already heard about Edgar. Regan twists the affair to link it with Lear and his knights, as though her life is in danger from them:

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDMUND**

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

**REGAN**

No marvel, then, though he were ill affected:  
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,  
To have the expense and waste of his revenues.

Regan and Cornwall have come to Gloucester's house to avoid admitting Lear to their own home.

### **SCENE II. Before Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter KENT and OSWALD, separately.* Kent recognizes Oswald and attacks him (symbolic conflict between servants from the two sides of the moral equation)

*Enter EDMUND, with his rapier drawn, CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and Servants.*

After a lengthy exchange, in which Kent is identified as Lear's servant, Cornwall decides to put him in the stocks, a shaming punishment. Gloucester is unhappy at this but can do nothing. Kent, left alone, produces a letter he has received from Cordelia.

### **SCENE III. A wood.**

*Enter EDGAR* In order to disguise himself, he decides to become a mad beggar.

**EDGAR**

I will preserve myself: and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury, in contempt of man,  
Brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth;  
Blanket my loins: elf all my hair in knots;  
And with presented nakedness out-face  
The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,  
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,  
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!  
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

*Exit*

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

*Enter KING LEAR, Fool, and Gentleman* They have been to Regan's home and not found her, so they have come to Gloucester's. Lear finds Kent in the stocks, despite his status as the King's servant. Lear is horrified.

**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  
for thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

**KING LEAR**

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!  
Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,  
Thy element's below! Where is this daughter?

**KENT**

With the earl, sir, here within.

**KING LEAR**

Follow me not;  
Stay here.

*Exit*

*Re-enter KING LEAR with GLOUCESTER*



**KING LEAR**

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?  
They have travell'd all the night? Mere fetches;  
The images of revolt and flying off.  
Fetch me a better answer.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**KING LEAR**

Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!  
Fiery? what quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,  
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.

**KING LEAR**

Inform'd them! Dost thou understand me, man?

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, my good lord.

**KING LEAR**

The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father  
Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:  
Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood!  
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 fall'n out with my more headier will,  
To take the indisposed 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 of the duke and her  
Is practise only. Give me my servant forth.  
Go tell the duke and 's wife I'd speak with them,  
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,  
Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum  
Till it cry sleep to death.

**GLOUCESTER**

I would have all well betwixt you.

*Exit***KING LEAR**

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

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and Servants*

**KING LEAR**

Good morrow to you both.

**CORNWALL**

Hail to your grace!

*KENT is set at liberty*

**REGAN**

I am glad to see your highness.

**KING LEAR**

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

*To KENT*

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

*Points to his heart*

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

**REGAN**

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

**KING LEAR**

Say, how is that?

**REGAN**

I cannot think my sister in the least  
Would fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance  
She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,  
'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,  
As clears her from all blame.

**KING LEAR**

My curses on her!

**REGAN**

O, sir, you are old.  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of her confine: you should be ruled and led  
By some discretion, that discerns your state  
Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,  
That to our sister you do make return;  
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

**KING LEAR**

Ask her forgiveness?  
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:  
'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;

*Kneeling*

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

**REGAN**

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

**KING LEAR**

[Rising] Never, Regan:  
She hath abated me of half my train;  
Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:  
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall  
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,  
You taking airs, with lameness!

**CORNWALL**

Fie, sir, fie!

**KING LEAR**

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

**REGAN**

O the blest gods! so will you wish on me,  
When the rash mood is on.

**KING LEAR**

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:  
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give  
Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce; but thine  
Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee  
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,  
To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,  
And in conclusion to oppose the bolt  
Against my coming in: thou better know'st  
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,  
Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude;  
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,  
Wherein I thee endow'd.

**REGAN**

Good sir, to the purpose.

**KING LEAR**

Who put my man i' the stocks?

*Tucket within*

**CORNWALL**

What trumpet's that?

**REGAN**

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

*Enter OSWALD*

Is your lady come?

**KING LEAR**

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

**CORNWALL**

What means your grace?

**KING LEAR**

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

*Enter GONERIL*

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

*To GONERIL*

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

**GONERIL**

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

**KING LEAR**

O sides, you are too tough;  
Will you yet hold? How came my man i' the stocks?

**CORNWALL**

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

**KING LEAR**

You! did you?

**REGAN**

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.  
If, till the expiration of your month,  
You will return and sojourn with my sister,  
Dismissing half your train, come then to me:  
I am now from home, and out of that provision  
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

**KING LEAR**

Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?  
No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose  
To wage against the enmity o' the air;  
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,--  
Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?  
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  
To this detested groom.

*Pointing at OSWALD*

**GONERIL**

At your choice, sir.

**KING LEAR**

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:  
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:  
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:  
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;  
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,  
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,  
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,  
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee;  
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:  
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,  
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove:  
Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure:  
I can be patient; I can stay with Regan,  
I and my hundred knights.

**REGAN**

Not altogether so:  
I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided  
For your fit welcome. 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.

**KING LEAR**

Is this well spoken?

**REGAN**

I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?  
Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger  
Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,  
Should many people, under two commands,  
Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

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

**KING LEAR**

I gave you all--

**REGAN**

And in good time you gave it.

**KING LEAR**

Made you my guardians, my depositaries;  
But kept a reservation to be follow'd  
With such a number. What, must I come to you  
With five and twenty, Regan? said you so?

**REGAN**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

*To GONERIL*

I'll go with thee:

Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,  
And thou art twice her love.

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

What need one?

**KING LEAR**

O, reason not the need: our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;  
If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,--  
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!  
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,  
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!  
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts  
Against their father, fool me not so much  
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,  
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,  
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,  
I will have such revenges on you both,  
That all the world shall--I will do such things,--  
What they are, yet I know not: but they shall be  
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep  
No, I'll not weep:  
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart  
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

*Exeunt KING LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT, and Fool Storm and tempest*

**CORNWALL**

Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is in high rage.

**CORNWALL**

Whither is he going?

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**CORNWALL**

'Tis best to give him way; he leads himself.

**GONERIL**

My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds  
Do sorely ruffle; for many miles a bout  
There's scarce a bush.

**REGAN**

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 abused, wisdom bids fear.

**CORNWALL**

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

*Exeunt*

**ACT III**

**SCENE I. A heath.**

*Storm still. Enter KENT and a Gentleman, meeting*

The man describes Lear raving in the storm. Kent reveals that Cordelia is coming from France with an army to reinstate Lear.

*Exeunt severally*

## **SCENE II. Another part of the heath. Storm still.**

*Enter KING LEAR and Fool*

### **KING LEAR**

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!  
Crack nature's moulds, an germens spill at once,  
That make ingrateful man!

### **Fool**

O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters' blessing: here's a night pities neither wise man nor fool.

### **KING LEAR**

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:  
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;  
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,  
You owe me no subscription: then let fall  
Your horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave,  
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man:  
But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That have with two pernicious daughters join'd  
Your high engender'd battles 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this. O! O! 'tis foul!

*Kent joins them*

### **KING 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 perjured, and thou simular man of virtue  
That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,  
That under covert and convenient seeming  
Hast practised on man's life: close pent-up guilts,  
Rive your concealing continents, and cry  
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
More sinn'd against than sinning.

### **KENT**

Alack, 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 harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised;  
Which even but now, demanding after you,  
Denied me to come in--return, and force  
Their scanted courtesy.

**KING LEAR**

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

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**SCENE III. Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.* Gloucester tells Edmund that he has received a letter informing him of Cordelia's coming. Edmund plans to denounce his father to Cornwall and so obtain his land and title.

**SCENE IV. The heath. Before a hovel.**

*Enter KING LEAR, KENT, and Fool*

**KENT**

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

*Storm still*

**KING LEAR**

Let me alone.

**KENT**

Good my lord, enter here.

**KING LEAR**

Wilt break my heart?

**KENT**

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

**KING LEAR**

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;  
But where the greater malady is fix'd,

The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'ldst shun a bear;  
But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,  
Thou'ldst 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,--  
O, that way madness lies; let me shun that;  
No more of that.

**KENT**

Good my lord, enter here.

**KING LEAR**

Prithee, go in thyself: seek thine own ease:  
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.

*To the Fool*

In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty,--  
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

*Fool goes in*

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

**EDGAR**

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

*Enter EDGAR disguised as a mad man*

**EDGAR**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**EDGAR**

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

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

*Storm still*

**KING LEAR**

What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?  
Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

**Fool**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**KENT**

He hath no daughters, sir.

**KING LEAR**

Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.  
Is it the fashion, that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
Judicious punishment! 'twas this flesh begot  
Those pelican daughters.

**EDGAR**

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

**Fool**

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

**EDGAR**

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

**KING LEAR**

What hast thou been?

**EDGAR**

A serving-man, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair; wore gloves in my cap; served the lust  
of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with her; 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, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey.  
Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep thy foot  
out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend.  
Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind:  
Says suum, mun, ha, no, nonny.  
Dolphin my boy, my boy, sessa! let him trot by.

*Storm still*

**KING LEAR**

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

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

*Tearing off his clothes*

**Fool**

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

*Enter GLOUCESTER, with a torch.* The madness (pretended) of Edgar drives Lear over the edge as he sympathizes with "Poor Tom." Gloucester is risking his life by helping Lear, he is also heart-broken at what he believes Edgar has plotted.

**SCENE V. Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND* Cornwall has the letter Gloucester received from Cordelia. He is angry. Edmund is now Earl of Gloucester.

**EDMUND**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

*Exeunt*

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

*Enter GLOUCESTER, KING LEAR, KENT, Fool, and EDGAR* Gloucester goes to find clothes etc. Lear, quite mad, wants to try Goneril and Regan, himself, the Fool and Poor Tom being the judges. Perfect madness, until he is exhausted.

**KENT**

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

**KING LEAR**

Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains: so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' he morning. So, so, so.

**Fool**

And I'll go to bed at noon.

(The Fool never appears again in the play, his role is over).

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER* Who realizes that Lear is in great danger, he sends them toward Dover where Cordelia has arrived.

**SCENE VII. Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servants* with Gloucester a prisoner.

**REGAN**

Hang him instantly.

**GONERIL**

Pluck out his eyes.

**CORNWALL**

Leave him to my displeasure.

Cornwall send Goneril back to warn Albany of Cordelia's invasion, sending Edmund with her to "spare his feelings" as he punishes his father.

*Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three*

**REGAN**

Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

**CORNWALL**

Bind fast his corky arms.

**GLOUCESTER**

What mean your graces? Good my friends, consider

You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

**CORNWALL**

Bind him, I say.

*Servants bind him*

**REGAN**

Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

**GLOUCESTER**

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

**CORNWALL**

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

*REGAN plucks his beard*

**GLOUCESTER**

By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done

To pluck me by the beard.

**REGAN**

So white, and such a traitor!

**GLOUCESTER**

Naughty lady,

These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,

Will quicken, and accuse thee: I am your host:

With robbers' hands my hospitable favours

You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

**CORNWALL**

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

**REGAN**

Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

**CORNWALL**

And what confederacy have you with the traitors

Late footed in the kingdom?

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**CORNWALL**

Cunning.

**REGAN**

And false.

**CORNWALL**

Where hast thou sent the king?

**GLOUCESTER**

To Dover.

**REGAN**

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

**CORNWALL**

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

Wherefore to Dover, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Because I would not see thy cruel nails  
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister  
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.  
The sea, with such a storm as his bare head  
In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up,  
And quench'd the stelled fires:  
Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to rain.  
If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,  
Thou shouldst have said 'Good porter, turn the key,'  
All cruels else subscribed: but I shall see  
The winged vengeance overtake such children.

**CORNWALL**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

One side will mock another; the other too.

**CORNWALL**

If you see vengeance,--

**First Servant**

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

**REGAN**

How now, you dog!

**First Servant**

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

**CORNWALL**

My villain!

*They draw and fight*

**First Servant**

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

**REGAN**

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!

*Takes a sword, and runs at him behind*

**First Servant**

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

*Dies*

**CORNWALL**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?  
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,  
To quit this horrid act.

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

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

*Exit one with GLOUCESTER*

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

**CORNWALL**

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

*Exit CORNWALL, led by REGAN. The other servants agree to help Gloucester.*

**ACT IV**

**SCENE I. The heath.**

*Enter EDGAR Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man*

**Old Man**

Fellow, where goest?

**GLOUCESTER**

Is it a beggar-man?

**Old Man**

Madman and beggar too.

**GLOUCESTER**

He has some reason, else he could not beg.

I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw;

Which made me think a man a worm: my son

Came then into my mind; and yet my mind

Was then scarce friends with him: I have heard more since.

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods.

They kill us for their sport.

Gloucester asks Poor Tom to lead him to the top of the cliff at Dover.

**EDGAR**

Give me thy arm:

Poor Tom shall lead thee.

*Exeunt*

## **SCENE II. Before ALBANY's palace.**

*Enter GONERIL and EDMUND* Goneril learns that her husband is glad of Cordelia's coming and diapproves of what they have done to Gloucester. She despises him. She indicates passionate interest in Edmund.

*Enter ALBANY*

**GONERIL**

I have been worth the whistle.

**ALBANY**

O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind

Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:

That nature, which contemns its origin,

Cannot be border'd certain in itself;

She that herself will sliver and disbranch

From her material sap, perforce must wither

And come to deadly use.

**GONERIL**

No more; the text is foolish.

**ALBANY**

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:

Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?

Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?

A father, and a gracious aged man,

Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,

Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.



Could my good brother suffer you to do it?  
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!  
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,  
It will come,  
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,  
Like monsters of the deep.

**GONERIL**

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

**ALBANY**

See thyself, devil!  
Proper deformity seems not in the fiend  
So horrid as in woman.

**GONERIL**

O vain fool!

**ALBANY**

Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,  
Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,  
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
Thy flesh and bones: howe'er thou art a fiend,  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

**GONERIL**

Marry, your manhood now--

*Enter a Messenger*

**ALBANY**

What news?

**Messenger**

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

**ALBANY**

Gloucester's eye!

**Messenger**

A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
Opposed against the act, bending his sword  
To his great master; who, thereat enraged,  
Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead;  
But not without that harmful stroke, which since  
Hath pluck'd him after.

**ALBANY**

This shows you are above,  
You justicers, that these our nether crimes  
So speedily can venge! But, O poor Gloucester!  
Lost he his other eye?

**Messenger**

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

**GONERIL**

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

*Exit*

**SCENE III. The French camp near Dover.**

*Enter KENT and a Gentleman* The King of France has had to go back, leaving Cordelia in England with the army.

**KENT**

Did your letters pierce the queen to any demonstration of grief?

**Gentleman**

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

**KENT**

O, then it moved her.

**Gentleman**

Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears  
Were like a better way: those happy smilets,  
That play'd on her ripe lip, seem'd not to know  
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence,  
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved,  
If all could so become it.

**KENT**

Made she no verbal question?

**Gentleman**

'Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of 'father'  
Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart:  
Cried 'Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies! sisters!  
Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the night?  
Let pity not be believed!' There she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
And clamour moisten'd: then away she started  
To deal with grief alone.

**KENT**

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

**Gentleman**

No.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE IV. The same. A tent.**

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

**CORDELIA**

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

*Exit an Officer*

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

**Doctor**

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

**CORDELIA**

All blest secrets,  
All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate  
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him;  
Lest his ungovern'd rage dissolve the life  
That wants the means to lead it.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE V. Gloucester's castle.**

*Enter REGAN and OSWALD* Regan tells him that since her husband is dead, she wants Edmund and is jealous of her sister's obvious interest in him.

*Exeunt*

## SCENE VI. Fields near Dover.

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant*

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks the ground is even.

**EDGAR**

Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

**GLOUCESTER**

No, truly.

**EDGAR**

Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect

By your eyes' anguish.

**GLOUCESTER**

So may it be, indeed:

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

In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

**EDGAR**

You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed

But in my garments.

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks you're better spoken.

**EDGAR**

Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful

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

The 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 yond tall anchoring bark,

Diminish'd to her cock; 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.

**GLOUCESTER**

Set me where you stand.

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand: you are now within a foot

Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon

Would I not leap upright.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let go my hand.

Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel

Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods

Prosper it with thee! Go thou farther off;  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

**EDGAR**

Now fare you well, good sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

With all my heart.

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

*He falls forward*

**EDGAR**

Gone, sir: farewell.

And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
The treasury of life, when life itself  
Yields to the theft: had he been where he thought,  
By this, had thought been past. Alive or dead?  
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!  
Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.  
What are you, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Away, and let me die.

**EDGAR**

Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
So many fathom down precipitating,  
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;  
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art sound.  
Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:  
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

**GLOUCESTER**

But have I fall'n, or no?

**EDGAR**

From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far  
Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, I have no eyes.  
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,  
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,  
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,  
And frustrate his proud will.

**EDGAR**

Give me your arm:

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Too well, too well.

**EDGAR**

This is above all strangeness.

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

Which parted from you?

**GLOUCESTER**

A poor unfortunate beggar.

**EDGAR**

As I stood here below, methought his eyes

Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,

Horns whelk'd and waved like the enridged sea:

It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,

Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours

Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear

Affliction till it do cry out itself

'Enough, enough,' and die. That thing you speak of,

I took it for a man; often 'twould say

'The fiend, the fiend:' he led me to that place.

**EDGAR**

Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

*Enter KING LEAR, fantastically dressed with wild flowers*

**GLOUCESTER**

O, let me kiss that hand!

**KING LEAR**

Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

**GLOUCESTER**

O ruin'd piece of nature! This great world

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDGAR**

I would not take this from report; it is,

And my heart breaks at it.

**KING LEAR**

Read.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, with the case of eyes?

**KING LEAR**

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.

**GLOUCESTER**

I see it feelingly.

**KING LEAR**

What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, sir.

**KING LEAR**

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

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

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

Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind

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

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;

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

And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:

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

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

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

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

And like a scurvy politician, seem

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

Pull off my boots: harder, harder: so.

**EDGAR**

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

**KING LEAR**

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:

Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,

We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, alack the day!

**KING LEAR**

When we are born, we cry that we are come

To this great stage of fools: this a good block;

It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe

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

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

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

*Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants. Lear exits running; Attendants follow*

*Enter OSWALD* He prepares to kill Gloucester but Poor Tom / Edgar kills him and finds a compromising letter from Goneril to Edmund,

*Exeunt*

**SCENE VII. A tent in the French camp. LEAR on a bed asleep, soft music playing; Gentleman, and others attending.**

*Enter CORDELIA, KENT, and Doctor*

**Cordelia**

How does the king?

**Doctor**

Madam, sleeps still.

**CORDELIA**

O you kind gods,

Cure this great breach in his abused nature!

The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up

Of this child-changed father!

**Doctor**

So please your majesty

That we may wake the king: he hath slept long.

**CORDELIA**

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

**KING LEAR**

You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears

Do scald like moulten lead.

**CORDELIA**

Sir, do you know me?

**KING LEAR**

You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

**CORDELIA**

Still, still, far wide!

**Doctor**

He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

**KING LEAR**

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity,

To see another thus. I know not what to say.

I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;

I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured

Of my condition!

**CORDELIA**

O, look upon me, sir,

And hold your hands in benediction o'er me:

No, sir, you must not kneel.

**KING LEAR**

Pray, do not mock me:

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;

And, to deal plainly,

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks I should know you, and know this man;

Yet I am doubtful for I am mainly ignorant

What place this is; and all the skill I have

Remembers not these garments; nor I know not

Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;



For, as I am a man, I think this lady  
To be my child Cordelia.

**CORDELIA**

And so I am, I am.

**KING LEAR**

Be your tears wet? yes, 'faith. I pray, weep not:  
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.  
I know you do not love me; for your sisters  
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:  
You have some cause, they have not.

**CORDELIA**

No cause, no cause.

**KING LEAR**

Am I in France?

**KENT**

In your own kingdom, sir.

**KING LEAR**

Do not abuse me.

**Doctor**

Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,  
You see, is kill'd in him: and yet it is danger  
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.  
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more  
Till further settling.

**CORDELIA**

Will't please your highness walk?

**KING LEAR**

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

*Exeunt all*

## **ACT V**

### **SCENE I. The British camp, near Dover.**

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

Regan tells Edmund she is jealous of Goneril

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

**GONERIL**

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

There is strong moral tension between Albany (supporting Lear) and the others. Edgar enters, disguised and gives Albany Goneril's letter. He promises to serve as champion when the time comes.

*Exit*

**EDMUND**

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

*Exit*

**SCENE II. A field between the two camps.**

*Alarum within. Very brief battle*

**SCENE III. The British camp near Dover.**

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

**EDMUND**

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

**CORDELIA**

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

**KING LEAR**

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

**EDMUND**

Take them away.

**KING LEAR**

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?  
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,  
And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;  
The good-years shall devour them, flesh and fell,  
Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em starve  
first. Come.

*Exeunt KING LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded. Edmund orders the guard to kill them in prison*

*Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, another Captain, and Soldiers* Albany claims authority over Edmund, but Regan says he is her representative, so equal to him. Goneril ask if she plans to marry him. Regan feels sick and is unable to reply. Albany arrests Edmund and mocks Regan, saying Edmund is engaged to his own wife, Goneril. A challenge is proclaimed, a champion is summoned to fight against Edmund in trial by combat.

**REGAN**

Sick, O, sick!

**GONERIL**

[Aside] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

**REGAN**

My sickness grows upon me.

**ALBANY**

She is not well; convey her to my tent.

*Exit Regan, led*

*A trumpet sounds* Edgar enters, armed, refuses to say who he is.

*Alarums. They fight. EDMUND falls wounded. Albany shows the letter to EDMUND. Edgar identifies himself, tells how Gloucester died*

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.

*Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife*

**Gentleman**

Help, help, O, help!

**EDGAR**

What kind of help?

**ALBANY**

Speak, man.

**EDGAR**

What means that bloody knife?

**Gentleman**

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

**ALBANY**

Who dead? speak, man.

**Gentleman**

Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister  
By her is poisoned; she hath confess'd it.

**EDMUND**

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

**EDGAR**

Here comes Kent.

**ALBANY**

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

*Exit Gentleman*

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

**KING LEAR**

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!  
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;  
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;  
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
Why, then she lives.

**KENT**

Is this the promised end

**EDGAR**

Or image of that horror?

**ALBANY**

Fall, and cease!

**KING LEAR**

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

**KENT**

[Kneeling] O my good master!

**KING LEAR**

Prithee, away.

**EDGAR**

'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

**KING LEAR**

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!  
Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!  
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,

Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

**Captain**

'Tis true, my lords, he did.

**KING LEAR**

Did I not, fellow?

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion  
I would have made them skip: I am old now,  
And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?  
Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight.

**KENT**

If fortune brag of two she loved and hated,  
One of them we behold.

**KING LEAR**

This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

**KENT**

The same,

Your servant Kent: Where is your servant Caius?

**KING LEAR**

He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;  
He'll strike, and quickly too: he's dead and rotten.

**KENT**

No, my good lord; I am the very man,--

**KING LEAR**

I'll see that straight.

**KENT**

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

**KING LEAR**

You are welcome hither.

**KENT**

Nor no man else: all's cheerless, dark, and deadly.  
Your eldest daughters have fordone them selves,  
And desperately are dead.

**KING LEAR**

Ay, so I think.

**ALBANY**

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

**EDGAR**

Very bootless.

*Enter a Captain*

**Captain**

Edmund is dead, my lord.

**ALBANY**

That's but a trifle here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent.

What comfort to this great decay may come

Shall be applied: for us we will resign,

During the life of this old majesty,  
To him our absolute power:

*To EDGAR and KENT*

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

**KING LEAR**

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!  
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never, never!  
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,  
Look there, look there!

*Dies*

**EDGAR**

He faints! My lord, my lord!

**KENT**

Break, heart; I prithee, break!

**EDGAR**

Look up, my lord.

**KENT**

Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him much  
That would upon the rack of this tough world  
Stretch him out longer.

**EDGAR**

He is gone, indeed.

**KENT**

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

**ALBANY**

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

*To KENT and EDGAR*

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

**KENT**

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

**ALBANY**

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

*Exeunt, with a dead march*