King Lear

by William Shakespeare

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Act I

Scene I

King Lear’s palace

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund. Kent I thought the king had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall. Gloucester It did always seem so to us: but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most; for equalities are so weighed, that curiosity in neither can make choice of either’s moiety. Kent Is not this your son, my lord? Gloucester His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it. Kent I cannot conceive you. Gloucester Sir, this young fellow’s mother could: whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had, indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault? Kent I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper. Gloucester But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account: though this knave came something saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund? Edmund No, my lord. Gloucester My lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend. Edmund My services to your lordship. Kent I must love you, and sue to know you better. Edmund Sir, I shall study deserving. Gloucester He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. The king is coming. Sennet. Enter King Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Attendants. King Lear Attend the lords of

France and Burgundy, Gloucester. Gloucester I shall, my liege. Exeunt Gloucester and Edmund. King Lear

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose. Give me the map there. Know that we have divided In three our kingdom: and ’tis our fast intent To shake all cares and business from our age; Conferring them on younger strengths, while we Unburthen’d crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall, And you, our no less loving son of Albany, We have this hour a constant will to publish Our daughters’ several dowers, that future strife May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy, Great rivals in our youngest daughter’s love, Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn, And here are to be answer’d. Tell me, my daughters— Since now we will divest us both of rule, Interest of territory, cares of state— Which of you shall we say doth love us most? That we our largest bounty may extend Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril, Our eldest-born, speak first.

Goneril

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter; Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty; Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare; No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour; As much as child e’er loved, or father found; A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable; Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

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

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this, With shadowy forests and with champains rich’d, With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads, We make thee lady: to thine and Albany’s issue Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter, Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

Regan

Sir, I am made Of the self-same metal that my sister is, And prize me at her worth. In my true heart I find she names my very deed of love; Only she comes too short: that I profess Myself an enemy to all other joys, Which the most precious square of

sense possesses; And find I am alone felicitate In your dear highness' love.

Cordelia

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

King Lear

To thee and thine hereditary ever Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom; No less in space, validity, and pleasure, Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy, Although the last, not least; to whose young love The vines of France and milk of Burgundy Strive to be interess'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.

Kent Good my liege— King Lear

Peace, Kent! Come not between the dragon and his wrath. I loved her most, and thought to set my rest On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight! So be my grave my peace, as here I give Her father's heart from her! Call France; who stirs? Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany, With my two daughters' dowers digest this third: Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her. I do invest you jointly with my power, Pre-eminence, and all the large effects That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course, With reservation of an hundred knights, By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain The name, and all the additions to a king; The sway, revenue, execution of the rest, Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm, This coronet part betwixt you. Giving the crown.

Kent

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

King Lear

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

Kent

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly, When Lear is mad. What wilt thou do, old man? Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak, When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound, When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom; And, in thy best consideration, cheque This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment, Thy

youngest daughter does not love thee least; Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound Reverbs no hollowness.

King Lear

Kent, on thy life, no more.

Kent

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

King Lear Out of my sight! Kent

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

King Lear Now, by Apollo— Kent

Now, by Apollo, king, Thou swear’st thy gods in vain.

King Lear O, vassal! miscreant! Laying his hand on his sword. Albany Cornwall Dear sir, forbear. Kent

Do: Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow Upon thy foul disease. Revoke thy doom; Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat, I’ll tell thee thou dost evil.

King Lear

Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance, hear me! Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow, Which we durst never yet, and with strain’d pride To come between our sentence and our power, Which nor our nature nor our place can bear, Our potency made good, take thy reward. Five days we do allot thee, for provision To shield thee from diseases of the world; And on the sixth to turn thy hated back Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following, Thy banish’d trunk be found in our dominions, The moment is thy death. Away! by Jupiter, This shall not be revoked.

Kent

Fare thee well, king: sith thus thou wilt appear, Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here. To Cordelia. The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid, That

justly think’st, and hast most rightly said! To Regan and Goneril. And your large speeches may your deeds approve, That good effects may spring from words of love. Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu; He’ll shape his old course in a country new. Exit.

Flourish. Reenter Gloucester, with King of France, Burgundy, and Attendants. Gloucester Here’s France and Burgundy, my noble lord. King Lear

My lord of Burgundy. We first address towards you, who with this king Hath rivall’d for our daughter: what, in the least, Will you require in present dower with her, Or cease your quest of love?

Burgundy

Most royal majesty, I crave no more than what your highness offer’d, Nor will you tender less.

King Lear

Right noble Burgundy, When she was dear to us, we did hold her so; But now her price is fall’n. Sir, there she stands: If aught within that little seeming substance, Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced, And nothing more, may fitly like your grace, She’s there, and she is yours.

Burgundy I know no answer. King Lear

Will you, with those infirmities she owes, Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate, Dower’d with our curse, and stranger’d with our oath, Take her, or leave her?

Burgundy

Pardon me, royal sir; Election makes not up on such conditions.

King Lear

Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that made me, I tell you all her wealth. To King of France. For you, great king, I would not from your love make such a stray, To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you To avert your liking a more

worthier way Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed Almost to acknowledge hers.

King of France

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

Cordelia

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

King Lear

Better thou Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

King of France

Is it but this—a tardiness in nature Which often leaves the history unspoke That it intends to do? My lord of Burgundy, What say you to the lady? Love's not love When it is mingled with regards that stand Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her? She is herself a dowry.

Burgundy

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

King Lear Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm. Burgundy

I am sorry, then, you have so lost a father That you must lose a husband.

Cordelia

Peace be with Burgundy! Since that respects of fortune are his love, I shall not be his wife.

King of France

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor; Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised! Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon: Be it lawful I take up what's cast away. Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect My love should kindle to inflamed respect. Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance, Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France: Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy Can buy this unprized precious maid of me. Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind: Thou losest here, a better where to find.

King Lear

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

King of France Bid farewell to your sisters. Cordelia

The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are; And like a sister am most loath to call Your faults as they are named. Use well our father: To your professed bosoms I commit him But yet, alas, stood I within his grace, I would prefer him to a better place. So, farewell to you both.

Regan Prescribe not us our duties. Goneril

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

Cordelia

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

King of France Come, my fair Cordelia. Exeunt King of France and Cordelia. Goneril Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will hence to-night. Regan That's most certain, and with you; next month with us. Goneril You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly. Regan 'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself. Goneril The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long-engraffed condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them. Regan Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment. Goneril There is further compliment of leavetaking between France and him. Pray you, let's hit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us. Regan We shall further think on't. Goneril We must do something, and i' the heat. Exeunt.

Scene II

The Earl of Gloucester's castle.

Enter Edmund, with a letter. Edmund

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law My services are bound. Wherefore should I Stand in the plague of custom, and permit The curiosity of nations to deprive me, For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base? When my dimensions are as well compact, My mind as generous, and my shape as true, As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us With base?

with baseness? bastardy? base, base? Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take More composition and fierce quality Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed, Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops, Got ’tween asleep and wake? Well, then, Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land: Our father’s love is to the bastard Edmund As to the legitimate: fine word—legitimate! Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed, And my invention thrive, Edmund the base Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper: Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter Gloucester. Gloucester

Kent banish’d thus! and France in choler parted! And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power! Confined to exhibition! All this done Upon the gad! Edmund, how now! what news?

Edmund So please your lordship, none. Putting up the letter. Gloucester Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter? Edmund I know no news, my lord. Gloucester What paper were you reading? Edmund Nothing, my lord. Gloucester No? What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let’s see: come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles. Edmund I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o’er-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o’er-looking. Gloucester Give me the letter, sir. Edmund I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame. Gloucester Let’s see, let’s see. Edmund I hope, for my brother’s justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue. Gloucester Reads. “This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your

brother, Edgar.” Hum—conspiracy!—“Sleep till I waked him—you should enjoy half his revenue,”—My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in?—When came this to you? who brought it? Edmund It was not brought me, my lord; there’s the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet. Gloucester You know the character to be your brother’s? Edmund 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. Gloucester It is his. Edmund It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents. Gloucester Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business? Edmund Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue. Gloucester O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; I’ll apprehend him: abominable villain! Where is he? Edmund I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you shall run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honour, and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him, that he hath wrote this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no further pretence of danger. Gloucester Think you so? Edmund If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction; and that without any further delay than this very evening. Gloucester He cannot be such a monster— Edmund Nor is not, sure. Gloucester To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out: wind me into him, I pray you: frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself, to be in a due resolution. Edmund I will seek him, sir, presently: convey the business as I shall find means and acquaint you withal. Gloucester These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of

nature 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 ’twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there’s son against father: the king falls from bias of nature; there’s father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, honesty! ’Tis strange. Exit. Edmund This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster 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. Edgar How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in? Edmund I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses. Edgar Do you busy yourself about that? Edmund I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what. Edgar How long have you been a sectary

astronomical? Edmund Come, come; when saw you my father last? Edgar Why, the night gone by. Edmund Spake you with him? Edgar Ay, two hours together. Edmund Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance? Edgar None at all. Edmund Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him: and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure; which at this instant so rageth in him, that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay. Edgar Some villain hath done me wrong. Edmund That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent forbearance till the spied of his rage goes slower; and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: pray ye, go; there's my key: if you do stir abroad, go armed. Edgar Armed, brother! Edmund Brother, I advise you to the best; go armed: I am no honest man if there be any good meaning towards you: I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away. Edgar Shall I hear from you anon? Edmund I do serve you in this business. Exit Edgar. A credulous father! and a brother noble, Whose nature is so far from doing harms, That he suspects none: on whose foolish honesty My practises ride easy! I see the business. Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit: All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. Exit.

Scene III

The Duke of Albany's palace

Enter Goneril, and Oswald, her steward. Goneril Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool? Oswald Yes, madam. Goneril

By day and night he wrongs me; every hour He flashes into one gross crime or other, That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it: His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us On every trifle. 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.

Oswald He’s coming, madam; I hear him. Horns within. Goneril

Put on what weary negligence you please, You and your fellows; I’ll have it come to question: If he dislike it, let him to our sister, Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one, Not to be over-ruled. 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 used With cheques as flatteries—when they are seen abused. Remember what I tell you.

Oswald Well, madam. Goneril

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

Scene IV

A hall in the same.

Enter Kent, disguised. Kent

If but as well I other accents borrow, That can my speech defuse, my good intent May carry through itself to that full issue For which I razed my likeness. Now, banish’d Kent, If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn’d, So may it come, thy master, whom thou lovest, Shall find thee full of labours.

Horns within. Enter King Lear, Knights, and Attendants. King Lear Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready. Exit an Attendant. How now! what art thou? Kent A man, sir. King Lear What dost thou profess? what wouldst thou with us? Kent I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust: to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little; to fear judgment; to fight when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish. King Lear What art thou? Kent A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king. King Lear If thou

be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou? Kent Service. King Lear Who wouldst thou serve? Kent You. King Lear Dost thou know me, fellow? Kent No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master. King Lear What's that? Kent Authority. King Lear What services canst thou do? Kent I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in; and the best of me is diligence. King Lear How old art thou? Kent Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for any thing: I have years on my back forty eight. King Lear Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho, dinner! Where's my knave? my fool? Go you, and call my fool hither. Exit an Attendant. Enter Oswald. You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter? Oswald So please you—Exit. King Lear What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back. Exit a Knight. Where's my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep. Reenter Knight. How now! where's that mongrel? Knight He says, my lord, your daughter is not well. King Lear Why came not the slave back to me when I called him. Knight Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he would not. King Lear He would not! Knight My lord, I know not what the matter is; but, to my judgment, your highness is not entertained 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. King Lear Ha! sayest 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 wronged. King Lear Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception: I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into't. But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days. Knight Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away. King Lear No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak

with her. Exit an Attendant. Go you, call hither my fool. Exit an Attendant. Reenter Oswald. O, you sir, you, come you hither, sir: who am I, sir? Oswald My lady's father. King Lear "My lady's father"! my lord's knave: your whoreson dog! you slave! you cur! Oswald I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon. King Lear Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal? Striking him. Oswald I'll not be struck, my lord. Kent Nor tripped neither, you base football player. Tripping up his heels. King Lear I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee. Kent Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences: away, away! if you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry: but away! go to; have you wisdom? so. Pushes Oswald out. King Lear Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of thy service. Giving Kent money. Enter Fool. Fool Let me hire him too: here's my coxcomb. Offering Kent his cap. King Lear How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou? Fool Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb. Kent Why, fool? Fool Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour: nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly: there, take my coxcomb: why, this fellow has banished two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will; if thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters! King Lear Why, my boy? Fool If I gave them all my living, I'ld keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters. King Lear Take heed, sirrah; the whip. Fool Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out, when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink. King Lear A pestilent gall to me! Fool Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech. King Lear Do. Fool

Mark it, nuncle: Have more than thou showest, Speak less than thou knowest, Lend less than thou owest, Ride more than thou goest, Learn more than thou trowest, Set less than thou throwest; Leave thy drink and thy whore, And keep in-a-door, And thou shalt have more Than two tens to a score.

Kent This is nothing, fool. Fool Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle? King Lear Why,

no, boy; nothing can be made out of nothing. Fool To Kent. Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool. King Lear A bitter fool! Fool Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool? King Lear No, lad; teach me. Fool

That lord that counsell'd thee To give away thy land, Come place him here by me, Do thou for him stand: The sweet and bitter fool Will presently appear; The one in motley here, The other found out there.

King Lear Dost thou call me fool, boy? Fool All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with. Kent This is not altogether fool, my lord. Fool No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't: and ladies too, they will not let me have all fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns. King Lear What two crowns shall they be? Fool Why, after I have cut the egg i' the middle, and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou borest thy ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown, when thou gavest thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.

Singing. Fools had ne'er less wit in a year; For wise men are grown foppish, They know not how their wits to wear, Their manners are so apish.

King Lear When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah? Fool I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers: for when thou gavest them the rod, and put'st down thine own breeches,

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

Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie: I would fain learn to lie. King Lear An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped. Fool I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are: they'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have

me whipped for lying; and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o’ thing than a fool: and yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared thy wit o’ both sides, and left nothing i’ the middle: here comes one o’ the parings. Enter Goneril. King Lear How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on? Methinks you are too much of late i’ the frown. Fool Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a figure: I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing. To Goneril. Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing.

Mum, mum, He that keeps nor crust nor crum, Weary of all, shall want some.

Pointing to King Lear. That’s a shealed peascod. Goneril

Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool, But other of your insolent retinue Do hourly carp and quarrel; breaking forth In rank and not-to-be endured riots. Sir, I had thought, by making this well known unto you, To have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful, By what yourself too late have spoke and done. That you protect this course, and put it on By your allowance; which if you should, the fault Would not ’scape censure, nor the redresses sleep, Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal, Might in their working do you that offence, Which else were shame, that then necessity Will call discreet proceeding.

Fool

For, you trow, nuncle, The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, That it’s had it head bit off by it young. So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

King Lear Are you our daughter? Goneril

Come, sir, I would you would make use of that good wisdom, Whereof I know you are fraught; and put away These dispositions, that of late transform you From what you rightly are.

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

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

Fool Lear’s shadow. King Lear I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters. Fool Which they will make an obedient father. King Lear Your name, fair gentlewoman? Goneril

This admiration, sir, is much o’ the savour Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you To understand my purposes aright: As you are old and reverend, you should be wise. Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires; Men so disorder’d, so debosh’d and bold, That this our court, infected with their manners, Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust Make it more like a tavern or a brothel Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak For instant remedy: be then desired By her, that else will take the thing she begs, A little to disquantity your train; And the remainder, that shall still depend, To be such men as may besort your age, And know themselves and you.

King Lear

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

Goneril

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

Enter Albany. King Lear

Woe, that too late repents— To Albany. O, sir, are you come? Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses. Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend, More hideous when thou show’st thee in a child Than the sea-monster!

Albany Pray, sir, be patient. King Lear

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

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.

Albany Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this? Goneril

Never afflict yourself to know the cause; But let his disposition have that scope That dotage gives it.

Reenter King Lear. King Lear

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

Albany What's the matter, sir? King Lear

I'll tell thee: To Goneril. Life and death! I am ashamed That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus; That these hot tears, which break from me perforce, Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee! The untented woundings of a father's curse Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes, Beweep this cause

again, I'll pluck ye out, And cast you, with the waters that you lose, To temper clay. Yea, 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 wolvish visage. Thou shalt find That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think I have cast off for ever: thou shalt, I warrant thee. Exeunt King Lear, Kent, and Attendants.

Goneril Do you mark that, my lord? Albany

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

Goneril Pray you, content. What, Oswald, ho! To the Fool. You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master. Fool

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

Goneril

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

Albany Well, you may fear too far. Goneril

Safer than trust too far: Let me still take away the harms I fear, Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart. What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister If she sustain him and his hundred knights When I have show'd the unfitness—

Reenter Oswald.

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

Oswald Yes, madam. Goneril

Take you some company, and away to horse: Inform her full of my particular fear;

And thereto add such reasons of your own As may compact it more. Get you gone; And hasten your return. Exit Oswald.

No, no, my lord, This milky gentleness and course of yours Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon, You are much more attask'd for want of wisdom Than praised for harmful mildness.

Albany

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

Goneril Nay, then— Albany Well, well; the event. Exeunt.

Scene V

Court before the same.

Enter King Lear, Kent, and Fool. King Lear

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

Kent I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your letter. Exit. Fool If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in danger of kibes? King Lear Ay, boy. Fool Then, I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall ne'er go slip-shod. King Lear Ha, ha, ha! Fool Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for though she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I can tell what I can tell. King Lear Why, what canst thou tell, my boy? Fool She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' the middle on's face? King Lear No. Fool Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose; that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into. King Lear I did her wrong— Fool Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell? King Lear No. Fool Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house. King Lear Why? Fool Why, to put his head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns

without a case. King Lear I will forget my nature. So kind a father! Be my horses ready? Fool Thy asses are gone about ’em. The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason. King Lear Because they are not eight? Fool Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool. King Lear To take ’t again perforce! Monster ingratitude! Fool If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I’ld 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!

Enter Gentleman. How now! are the horses ready? Gentleman Ready, my lord. King Lear Come, boy. Fool

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

Act II

Scene I

Gloucester’s castle.

Enter Edmund, and Curan meets him. Edmund Save thee, Curan. Curan And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him this night. Edmund How comes that? Curan Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad; I mean the whispered ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments? Edmund Not I: pray you, what are they? Curan Have you heard of no likely wars toward, ’twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany? Edmund Not a word. Curan You may do, then, in time. Fare you well, sir. Exit. Edmund

The duke be here to-night? The better! best! This weaves itself perforce into my

business. My father hath set guard to take my brother; And I have one thing, of a queasy question, Which I must act: briefness and fortune, work! Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

Enter Edgar.

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

Edgar I am sure on’t, not a word. Edmund

I hear my father coming: pardon me: In cunning I must draw my sword upon you Draw; seem to defend yourself; now quit you well. Yield: come before my father. Light, ho, here! Fly, brother. Torches, torches! So, farewell. Exit Edgar. Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion. Wounds his arm. Of my more fierce endeavour: I have seen drunkards Do more than this in sport. Father, father! Stop, stop! No help?

Enter Gloucester, and Servants with torches. Gloucester Now, Edmund, where’s the villain? Edmund

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

Gloucester But where is he? Edmund Look, sir, I bleed. Gloucester Where is the villain, Edmund? Edmund Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could— Gloucester Pursue him, ho! Go after. Exeunt some Servants. By no means what? Edmund

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship; 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, lanced mine arm: But when he saw my best alarum’d

spirits, Bold in the quarrel’s right, roused to the encounter, Or whether gasted by the noise I made, Full suddenly he fled.

Gloucester

Let him fly far: Not in this land shall he remain uncaught; And found—dispatch. The noble duke my master, My worthy arch 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.

Edmund

When I dissuaded him from his intent, And found him pight to do it, with curst speech I threaten’d to discover him: he replied, “Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou think, If I would stand against thee, would the reposal Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee Make thy words faith’d? No: what I should deny— As this I would: ay, though thou didst produce My very character—I’ld turn it all To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practise: 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.”

Gloucester

Strong and fasten’d villain Would he deny his letter? I never got him. Tucket within. Hark, the duke’s trumpets! I know not why he comes. All ports I’ll bar; the villain shall not ’scape; The duke must grant me that: besides, his picture I will send far and near, that all the kingdom May have the due note of him; and of my land, Loyal and natural boy, I’ll work the means To make thee capable.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Attendants. Cornwall

How now, my noble friend! since I came hither, Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

Regan

If it be true, all vengeance comes too short Which can pursue the offender. How dost, my lord?

Gloucester

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

Regan

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

Gloucester

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

Regan

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

Gloucester

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

Edmund

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

Regan

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

Cornwall

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

Edmund

’Twas my duty, sir.

Gloucester

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

Cornwall

Is he pursued?

Gloucester

Ay, my good lord.

Cornwall

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

Edmund

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

Gloucester

For him I thank your grace.

Cornwall

You know not why we came to visit you—

Regan

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

Gloucester

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

Scene II

Before Gloucester’s castle.

Enter Kent and Oswald, severally. Oswald Good dawning to thee, friend: art of this house? Kent Ay. Oswald Where may we set our horses? Kent I’ the mire. Oswald Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me. Kent I love thee not. Oswald Why, then, I care not for thee. Kent If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make thee care for me. Oswald Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not. Kent Fellow, I know thee. Oswald What dost thou know me for? Kent A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave, a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd, in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining, if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition. Oswald Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee! Kent What a brazen-faced varlet art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels, and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue: for, though it be night, yet the moon shines; I’ll make a sop o’ the moonshine of you: draw, you whoreson cullionly barber-monger, draw. Drawing his sword. Oswald Away! I have nothing to do with thee. Kent Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the king; and take vanity the puppet’s part against the royalty of her father: draw, you rogue, or I’ll so carbonado your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways. Oswald Help, ho! murder! help! Kent Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand; you neat slave, strike. Beating him. Oswald Help, ho! murder! murder! Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn, Cornwall,

Regan, Gloucester, and Servants. Edmund How now! What's the matter? Kent With you, goodman boy, an you please: come, I'll flesh ye; come on, young master. Gloucester Weapons! arms! What's the matter here? Cornwall Keep peace, upon your lives: He dies that strikes again. What is the matter? Regan The messengers from our sister and the king. Cornwall What is your difference? speak. Oswald I am scarce in breath, my lord. Kent No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee: a tailor made thee. Cornwall Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man? Kent Ay, a tailor, sir: a stone-cutter or painter could not have made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at the trade. Cornwall Speak yet, how grew your quarrel? Oswald This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard— Kent Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a jakes with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail? Cornwall

Peace, sirrah! You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

Kent Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege. Cornwall Why art thou angry? Kent

That such a slave as this should wear a sword, Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these, Like rats, oft bite the holy cords a-twain Which are too intrinse t' unloose; smooth every passion That in the natures of their lords rebel; Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods; Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks With every gale and vary of their masters, Knowing nought, like dogs, but following. A plague upon your epileptic visage! Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool? Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain, I'ld drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

Cornwall Why, art thou mad, old fellow? Gloucester How fell you out? say that. Kent

No contraries hold more antipathy Than I and such a knave.

Cornwall Why dost thou call him a knave? What's his offence? Kent His

countenance likes me not. Cornwall No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers. Kent

Sir, ’tis my occupation to be plain: I have seen better faces in my time Than stands on any shoulder that I see Before me at this instant.

Cornwall

This is some fellow, Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb Quite from his nature: he cannot flatter, he, An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth! An they will take it, so; if not, he’s plain. These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends Than twenty silly ducking observants That stretch their duties nicely.

Kent

Sir, in good sooth, in sincere verity, Under the allowance of your great aspect, Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire On flickering Phoebus’ front—

Cornwall What mean’st by this? Kent To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer: he that 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 entreat me to ’t. Cornwall What was the offence you gave him? Oswald

I never gave him any: It pleased the king his master very late To strike at me, upon his misconstruction; When he, conjunct and flattering his displeasure, Tripp’d me behind; being down, insulted, rail’d, And put upon him such a deal of man, That worthied him, got praises of the king For him attempting who was self-subdued; And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit, Drew on me here again.

Kent

None of these rogues and cowards But Ajax is their fool.

Cornwall

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

Kent

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

Cornwall

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

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

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

Regan Sir, being his knave, I will. Cornwall

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

Gloucester

Let me beseech your grace not to do so: His fault is much, and the good king his master Will cheque him for 't: your purposed low correction Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches For pilferings and most common trespasses Are punish'd with: the king must take it ill, That he's so slightly valued in his messenger, Should have him thus restrain'd.

Cornwall I'll answer that. Regan

My sister may receive it much more worse, To have her gentleman abused, assaulted, For following her affairs. Put in his legs. Kent is put in the stocks. Come, my good lord, away.

Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent. Gloucester

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

Kent

Pray, do not, sir: I have watched and travell’d hard; Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I’ll whistle. A good man’s fortune may grow out at heels: Give you good morrow!

Gloucester The duke’s to blame in this; ’twill be ill taken. Exit. Kent

Good king, that must approve the common saw, Thou out of heaven’s benediction comest To the warm sun! 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’erwatch’d, Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold This shameful lodging. Fortune, good night: smile once more: turn thy wheel! Sleeps.

Scene III

A wood.

Enter Edgar. Edgar

I heard myself proclaim’d; And by the happy hollow of a tree Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place, That guard, and most unusual vigilance, Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may ’scape, I will preserve myself: and am bethought To take the basest and most poorest shape That ever penury, in contempt of man, Brought near to beast: my face I’ll grime with filth; Blanket my loins: elf all my hair in knots; And with presented nakedness out-face The winds and persecutions of the sky. The country gives me proof and precedent Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices, Strike in their numb’d and mortified bare arms Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of

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

Scene IV

Before Gloucester’s castle.

Kent in the stocks. Enter King Lear, Fool, and Gentleman. King Lear

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

Gentleman

As I learn’d, The night before there was no purpose in them Of this remove.

Kent Hail to thee, noble master! King Lear

Ha! Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

Kent No, my lord. Fool Ha, ha! he wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs: when a man’s over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks. King Lear

What’s he that hath so much thy place mistook To set thee here?

Kent

It is both he and she; Your son and daughter.

King Lear No. Kent Yes. King Lear No, I say. Kent I say, yea. King Lear No, no, they would not. Kent Yes, they have. King Lear By Jupiter, I swear, no. Kent By Juno, I swear, ay. King Lear

They durst not do ’t; They could not, would not do ’t; ’tis worse than murder, To do upon respect such violent outrage: Resolve me, with all modest haste, which way Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage, Coming from us.

Kent

My lord, when at their home I did commend your highness' letters to them, Ere I was risen from the place that show'd My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post, Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth From Goneril his mistress salutations; Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission, Which presently they read: on whose contents, They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse; Commanded me to follow, and attend The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks: And meeting here the other messenger, Whose welcome, I perceived, had poison'd mine— Being the very fellow that of late Display'd so saucily against your highness— Having more man than wit about me, drew: He raised the house with loud and coward cries. Your son and daughter found this trespass worth The shame which here it suffers.

Fool

Winter's not gone yet, if the wild-geese fly that way. Fathers that wear rags Do make their children blind; But fathers that bear bags Shall see their children kind. 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.

Gentleman Made you no more offence but what you speak of? Kent

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

Fool And thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that question, thou hadst well deserved it. Kent Why, fool? Fool We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no

labouring i’ the winter. All that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men; and there’s not a nose among twenty but can smell him that’s stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following it: but the great one that goes up the hill, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again: I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

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

Kent Where learned you this, fool? Fool Not i’ the stocks, fool. Reenter 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’ld 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’ld speak with them, Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me, Or at their chamber-door I’ll beat the drum Till it cry sleep to death.

Gloucester I would have all well betwixt you. Exit. King Lear O me, my heart, my rising heart! but, down! Fool Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put ’em i’ the paste alive; she knapped ’em o’ the coxcombs with a stick, and cried ‘Down, wantons, down!’ ’Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay. Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, 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 vengeances 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 knee his throne, and, squire-like; pension beg To keep base life afoot. Return with her? Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter To this detested groom. Pointing at Oswald.

Goneril At your choice, sir. King Lear

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

Regan

Not altogether so: I look’d not for you yet, nor am provided For your fit welcome. 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. Reenter 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. Kent Who’s there, besides foul weather? Gentleman One minded like the weather, most unquietly. Kent I know you. Where’s the king? Gentleman

Contending with the fretful element: Bids the winds blow the earth into the sea, Or swell the curled water ’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 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? Gentleman

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 note, Commend a dear thing to you. There is division, Although as yet the face of it be cover’d With mutual cunning, ’twixt Albany and Cornwall; Who have—as who have not, that their great stars Throned and set high?—servants, who seem no less, Which are to France the spies and speculations Intelligent of our state; what hath been seen, Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes, Or the hard rein which both of them have borne Against the old kind king; or something deeper, Whereof perchance these are but

furnishings; But, true it is, from France there comes a power Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already, Wise in our negligence, have secret feet In some of our best ports, and are at point To show their open banner. Now to you: If on my credit you dare build so far To make your speed to Dover, you shall find Some that will thank you, making just report Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow The king hath cause to plain. I am a gentleman of blood and breeding; And, from some knowledge and assurance, offer This office to you.

Gentleman I will talk further with you. Kent

No, do not. For confirmation that I am much more Than my out-wall, open this purse, and take What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia— As fear not but you shall—show her this ring; And she will tell you who your fellow is That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm! I will go seek the king.

Gentleman Give me your hand: have you no more to say? Kent

Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet; That, when we have found the king—in which your pain That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him Holla the other. Exeunt severally.

Scene II

Another part of the heath. Storm still.

Enter 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!

Fool He that has a house to put's 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.

King Lear

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

Enter Kent. 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 the very wanderers of the dark, And make them keep their caves: since I was man, Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder, Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never Remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry The affliction nor the fear.

King Lear

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. Exeunt King Lear and Kent. Fool

This is a brave night to cool a courtezan. 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 used with feet. This prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time. Exit.

Scene III

Gloucester’s castle.

Enter Gloucester and Edmund. Gloucester Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desire their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house; charged me, on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him. Edmund Most savage and unnatural! Gloucester Go to; say you nothing. There’s a division betwixt the dukes; and a worse matter than that: I have received a letter this night; ’tis dangerous to be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet: these injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there’s part of a power already footed: we must incline to the king. I will seek him, and privily relieve him: go you and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived: if he ask for me. I am ill, and gone to bed. Though I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund; pray you, be careful. Exit. Edmund

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

Scene IV

The heath. Before a hovel.

Enter King Lear, Kent, and Fool. Kent

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

Storm still. King Lear Let me alone. Kent Good my lord, enter here. King Lear Wilt break my heart? Kent I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter. King Lear

Thou think’st ’tis much that this contentious storm Invades us to the skin: so ’tis to

thee; But where the greater malady is fix’d, The lesser is scarce felt. 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! The Fool runs out from the hovel. Fool Come not in here, nuncle, here’s a spirit. Help me, help me! Kent Give me thy hand. Who’s there? Fool A spirit, a spirit: he says his name’s poor Tom. Kent What art thou that dost grumble there i’ the straw? Come forth. Enter Edgar disguised as a mad man. Edgar

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

King Lear

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

Edgar Who gives any thing to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire

and through flame, and through ford and whirlipool e'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge; made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-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. Edgar This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet: he begins at curfew, and walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin, squints the eye, and makes the hare-lip; mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

S. Withold footed thrice the old; 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? King Lear What's he? Kent Who's there? What is't you seek? Gloucester What are you there? Your names? Edgar Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-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, Smulkin; peace, thou fiend! Gloucester What, hath your grace no better company? Edgar The prince of darkness is a gentleman: Modo he's

call’d, and Mahu. Gloucester

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

Edgar Poor Tom’s a-cold. Gloucester

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

King Lear

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

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

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

Edgar How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin. King Lear Let me ask you one word in private. Kent

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

Gloucester

Canst thou blame him? Storm still. His daughters seek his death: ah, that good Kent! He said it would be thus, poor banish’d man! Thou say’st the king grows mad; I’ll tell thee, friend, I am almost mad myself: I had a son, Now outlaw’d from my blood; he sought my life, But lately, very late: I loved him, friend; No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee, The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night’s this! I do beseech your grace—

King Lear O, cry your mercy, sir. Noble philosopher, your company. Edgar Tom’s a-cold. Gloucester In, fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee warm. King Lear Come let’s in all. Kent

This way, my lord.

King Lear With him; I will keep still with my philosopher. Kent Good my lord,

soothe him; let him take the fellow. Gloucester Take him you on. Kent Sirrah, come on; go along with us. King Lear Come, good Athenian. Gloucester No words, no words: hush. Edgar

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

Exeunt.

Scene V

Gloucester’s castle.

Enter Cornwall and Edmund. Cornwall I will have my revenge ere I depart his house. Edmund How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of. Cornwall I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother’s evil disposition made him seek his death; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reprovable badness in himself. Edmund How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France: O heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector! Cornwall Go with me to the duchess. Edmund If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand. Cornwall True or false, it hath made thee earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension. 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 Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can:

I will not be long from you. Kent All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience: the gods reward your kindness! Exit Gloucester. Edgar

Frateretto calls me; and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

Fool Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman? King Lear A king, a king! Fool No, he’s a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he’s a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him. King Lear

To have a thousand with red burning spits Come hissing in upon ’em—

Edgar The foul fiend bites my back. Fool He’s mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse’s health, a boy’s love, or a whore’s oath. King Lear

It shall be done; I will arraign them straight. To Edgar. Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer; To the Fool. Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she foxes!

Edgar

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

Fool

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

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

How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed: Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

King Lear

I’ll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence. To Edgar. Thou robed man of justice, take thy place; To the Fool. And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, Bench by his side: To Kent. you are o’ the commission, Sit you too.

Edgar

Let us deal justly. Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd? Thy sheep be in the corn; And for one blast of thy minikin mouth, Thy sheep shall take no harm. Pur! the cat is gray.

King Lear

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

Fool Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril? King Lear She cannot deny it. Fool Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool. King Lear

And here’s another, whose warp’d looks proclaim What store her heart is made on. Stop her there! Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place! False justicer, why hast thou let her ’scape?

Edgar Bless thy five wits! Kent

O pity! Sir, where is the patience now, That thou so oft have boasted to retain?

Edgar

Aside. My tears begin to take his part so much, They’ll mar my counterfeiting.

King Lear

The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me.

Edgar

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, 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. King Lear Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts? To Edgar. You,

sir, I entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian attire: but let them be changed. 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. Reenter Gloucester. Gloucester

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

Kent

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

Gloucester

Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms; I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him: There is a litter ready; lay him in 't, And drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master: If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life, With thine, and all that offer to defend him, Stand in assured loss: take up, take up; And follow me, that will to some provision Give thee quick conduct.

Kent

Oppressed nature sleeps: This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken senses, Which, if convenience will not allow, Stand in hard cure. To the Fool. Come, help to bear thy master; Thou must not stay behind.

Gloucester

Come, come, away. Exeunt all but Edgar.

Edgar

When we our betters see bearing our woes, We scarcely think our miseries our foes. Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind, Leaving free things and happy shows behind: But then the mind much sufferance doth o'er skip, When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship. How light and portable my pain seems now, When that

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

Scene VII

Gloucester’s castle.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund, and Servants. Cornwall Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. Seek out the villain Gloucester. Exeunt some of the Servants. Regan Hang him instantly. Goneril Pluck out his eyes. Cornwall Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most festinate preparation: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my lord of Gloucester. Enter Oswald. How now! where’s the king? Oswald

My lord of Gloucester hath convey’d him hence: Some five or six and thirty of his knights, Hot questrists after him, met him at gate; Who, with some other of the lords dependants, Are gone with him towards Dover; where they boast To have well-armed friends.

Cornwall Get horses for your mistress. Goneril Farewell, sweet lord, and sister. Cornwall

Edmund, farewell. Exeunt Goneril, Edmund, and Oswald. Go seek the traitor Gloucester, Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us. Exeunt other Servants. Though well we may not pass upon his life Without the form of justice, yet our power Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men May blame, but not control. Who’s there? the traitor?

Enter Gloucester, brought in by two or three. Regan Ingrateful fox! ’tis he. Cornwall Bind fast his corky arms. Gloucester

What mean your graces? Good my friends, consider You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

Cornwall Bind him, I say. Servants bind him. Regan Hard, hard. O filthy traitor! Gloucester Unmerciful lady as you are, I’m none. Cornwall

To this chair bind him. 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 holp the heavens to rain. If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time, Thou shouldst have said "Good porter, turn the key," All cruels else 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.

Second servant

I’ll never care what wickedness I do, If this man come to good.

Third servant

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

Second servant

Let’s follow the old earl, and get the Bedlam To lead him where he would: his roguish madness Allows itself to any thing.

Third servant

Go thou: I’ll fetch some flax and whites of eggs To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him! Exeunt severally.

Act IV

Scene I

The heath.

Enter Edgar. Edgar

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

Old man O, my good lord, I have been your tenant, and your father’s tenant, these fourscore years. Gloucester

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

Thee they may hurt.

Old man Alack, sir, you cannot see your way. Gloucester

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

Old man How now! Who’s there? Edgar

Aside. O gods! Who is’t can say “I am at the worst”? I am worse than e’er I was.

Old man ’Tis poor mad Tom. Edgar

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

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.

Edgar

Aside. How should this be? Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow, Angering itself and others.—Bless thee, master!

Gloucester Is that the naked fellow? Old man Ay, my lord. Gloucester

Then, prithee, get thee gone: if, for my sake, Thou wilt o’ertake us, hence a mile or twain, I’ the way toward Dover, do it for ancient love; And bring some covering for this naked soul, Who I’ll entreat to lead me.

Old man Alack, sir, he is mad. Gloucester

’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 ’parel that I have, Come on’t what will. Exit.

Gloucester Sirrah, naked fellow— Edgar Poor Tom’s a-cold. Aside. I cannot daub it further. Gloucester Come hither, fellow. Edgar Aside. And yet I must.—Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed. Gloucester Know’st thou the way to Dover? Edgar Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path. Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits: bless thee, good man’s son, from the foul fiend! five fiends have been in poor Tom at once; of lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So, bless thee, master! Gloucester

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens’ plagues Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched Makes thee the happier: heavens, deal so still! Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man, That slaves your ordinance, that will not see Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly; So distribution should undo excess, And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

Edgar Ay, master. Gloucester

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

Edgar

Give me thy arm: Poor Tom shall lead thee. Exeunt.

Scene II

Before Albany’s palace.

Enter Goneril and Edmund. Goneril

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

Enter Oswald. Now, where’s your master? Oswald

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

Goneril

To Edmund. Then shall you go no further. It is the cowish terror of his spirit, That dares not undertake: he’ll not feel wrongs Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother; Hasten his musters and conduct his powers: I must change arms at home, and give the distaff Into my husband’s hands. This trusty servant Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear, If you dare venture in your own behalf, A mistress’s command. Wear this; spare speech; Giving a favour. Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak, Would stretch thy spirits up into the air: Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edmund

Yours in the ranks of death.

Goneril

My most dear Gloucester! Exit Edmund. O, the difference of man and man! To thee a woman’s services are due: My fool usurps my body.

Oswald

Madam, here comes my lord. Exit.

Enter Albany. Goneril

I have been worth the whistle.

Albany

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

Goneril

No more; the text is foolish.

Albany

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile: Filths savour but themselves. What have you done? Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform’d? A father, and a gracious aged man, Whose reverence even the head-lugg’d bear would lick, Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded. Could my good brother suffer you to do it? A man, a prince, by him so benefited! If that the heavens do not their visible spirits Send quickly down to tame these vile offences, It will come, Humanity must perforce prey on itself, Like monsters of the deep.

Goneril

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

Albany

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

Goneril

O vain fool!

Albany

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

Goneril

Marry, your manhood now—

Enter a Messenger. Albany What news? Messenger

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

Albany Gloucester's eye! 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.

Albany Where was his son when they did take his eyes? Messenger Come with my lady hither. Albany He is not here. Messenger No, my good lord; I met him back

again. Albany Knows he the wickedness? Messenger

Ay, my good lord; ’twas he inform’d against him; And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment Might have the freer course.

Albany

Gloucester, I live To thank thee for the love thou show’dst the king, And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend: Tell me what more thou know’st. Exeunt.

Scene 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? Gentleman Something he left imperfect in the state, which since his coming forth is thought of; which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger, that his personal return was most required and necessary. Kent Who hath he left behind him general? Gentleman The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far. 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. Kent Was this before the king return’d? Gentleman No, since. Kent

Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear’s 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.

Gentleman

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.

Gentleman Alack, poor gentleman! Kent Of Albany’s and Cornwall’s powers you heard not? Gentleman ’Tis so, they are afoot. Kent

Well, sir, I’ll bring you to our master Lear, And leave you to attend him: some dear cause Will in concealment wrap me up awhile; When I am known aright, you shall

not grieve Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go Along with me. Exeunt.

Scene IV

The 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.

Enter a Messenger. Messenger

News, madam; The British powers are marching hitherward.

Cordelia

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

Scene V

Gloucester’s castle.

Enter Regan and Oswald. Regan But are my brother’s powers set forth? Oswald Ay, madam. Regan Himself in person there? Oswald Madam, with much ado: Your sister is the better soldier. Regan Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home? Oswald No, madam. Regan What might import my sister’s letter to him? Oswald I know not, lady. Regan

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

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

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

Oswald

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

Regan

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

Oswald

Madam, I had rather—

Regan

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

Oswald

I, madam?

Regan

I speak in understanding; you are; I know’t: Therefore I do advise you, take this note: My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk’d; And more convenient is he for my hand Than for your lady’s: you may gather more. If you do find him, pray you, give him this; And when your mistress hears thus much from you, I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her. So, fare you well. If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor, Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

Oswald

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

Regan

Fare thee well. Exeunt.

Scene VI

Fields near Dover.

Enter Gloucester, and Edgar dressed like a peasant. Gloucester When shall we come to the top of that same hill? Edgar You do climb up it now: look, how we labour. Gloucester Methinks the ground is even. Edgar Horrible steep. Hark, do you hear the sea? Gloucester No, truly. Edgar

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

Gloucester

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

Edgar

You’re much deceived: in nothing am I changed But in my garments.

Gloucester

Methinks you’re better spoken.

Edgar

Come on, sir; here’s the place: stand still. How fearful And dizzy ’tis, to cast one’s eyes so low! The 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.

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

King Lear No, they cannot touch me for coining; I am the king himself. Edgar O thou side-piercing sight! King Lear Nature’s above art in that respect. There’s your press-money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper: draw me a clothier’s yard. Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do ’t. There’s my gauntlet; I’ll prove it on a giant. Bring up the brown bills. O, well flown, bird! i’ the clout, i’ the clout: hewgh! Give the word. Edgar Sweet marjoram. King Lear Pass. Gloucester I know that voice. King Lear Ha! Goneril, with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog; and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say “ay” and “no” to every thing that I said!—“Ay” and “no” too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found ’em, there I smelt ’em out. Go to, they are not men o’ their words: they told me I was every thing; ’tis a lie, I am not ague-proof. Gloucester

The trick of that voice I do well remember: Is ’t not the king?

King Lear

Ay, every inch a king: When I do stare, see how the subject quakes. I pardon that man’s life. What was thy cause? Adultery? Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No: The wren goes to ’t, and the small gilded fly Does lecher in my sight. Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester’s bastard son Was kinder to his father than my daughters Got ’tween the lawful sheets. To ’t, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers. Behold yond simpering dame, Whose face between her forks presages snow; That minces virtue, and does shake the head To hear of pleasure’s name; The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to ’t With a more riotous appetite. Down from the waist they are Centaurs, Though women all above: But to the girdle do the gods inherit, Beneath is all the fiends’;

There’s hell, there’s darkness, there’s the sulphurous pit, Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination: there’s money for thee. Gloucester O, let me kiss that hand! King Lear Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality. Gloucester

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

King Lear I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou 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 pygmy's straw does pierce it. None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em: Take that of me, my friend, who have the power To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes; And like a scurvy politician, seem To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now: Pull off my boots: harder, harder: so.

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

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

Gloucester

Alack, alack the day!

King Lear

When we are born, we cry that we are come To this great stage of fools: this a good block; It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe A troop of horse with felt: I'll put 't in proof; And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law, Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

Enter a Gentleman, with Attendants. Gentleman

O, here he is: lay hand upon him. Sir, Your most dear daughter—

King Lear

No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even The natural fool of fortune. Use me well; You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons; I am cut to the brains.

Gentleman You shall have any thing. King Lear

No seconds? all myself? Why, this would make a man a man of salt, To use his eyes for garden water-pots, Ay, and laying autumn’s dust.

Gentleman Good sir— King Lear

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

Gentleman You are a royal one, and we obey you. King Lear Then there’s life in’t. Nay, if you get it, you shall get it with running. Sa, sa, sa, sa. Exit running; Attendants follow. Gentleman

A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch, Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter, Who redeems nature from the general curse Which twain have brought her to.

Edgar

Hail, gentle sir.

Gentleman

Sir, speed you: what’s your will?

Edgar

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

Gentleman

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

Edgar

But, by your favour, How near’s the other army?

Gentleman

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

Edgar

I thank you, sir: that’s all.

Gentleman

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

Edgar

I thank you, sir. Exit Gentleman.

Gloucester

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

Edgar

Well pray you, father.

Gloucester

Now, good sir, what are you?

Edgar

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

Gloucester

Hearty thanks: The bounty and the benison of heaven To boot, and boot!

Enter Oswald. Oswald

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

Gloucester

Now let thy friendly hand Put strength enough to’t. Edgar interposes.

Oswald

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

Edgar Ch’ill not let go, zir, without vurther ’casion. Oswald Let go, slave, or thou diest! Edgar Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. An chud ha’ bin zwaggered out of my life, ’twould not ha’ bin zo long as ’tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th’ old man; keep out, che vor ye, or ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder: ch’ill be plain with you. Oswald Out, dunghill! Edgar Ch’ill pick your teeth, zir: come; no matter vor your foins. They fight, and Edgar knocks him down. Oswald

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

Edgar

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

Gloucester

What, is he dead?

Edgar

Sit you down, father; rest you Let’s see these pockets: the letters that he speaks of May be my friends. He’s dead; 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’ld rip their hearts; Their papers, is more lawful.

Reads.

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

the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.

“Your—wife, so I would say— Affectionate servant,

“Goneril.”

O undistinguish’d space of woman’s will! A plot upon her virtuous husband’s life; And the exchange my brother! Here, in the sands, Thee I’ll rake up, the post unsanctified Of murderous lechers: and in the mature time With this ungracious paper strike the sight Of the death practised duke: for him ’tis well That of thy death and business I can tell.

Gloucester

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

Edgar

Give me your hand: Drum afar off. Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum: Come, father, I’ll bestow you with a friend. Exeunt.

Scene VII

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

Enter Cordelia, Kent, and Doctor. Cordelia

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

Kent

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

Cordelia

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

Kent

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

Cordelia

Then be’t so, my good lord. To the Doctor. How does the king?

Doctor Madam, sleeps still. Cordelia

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

Doctor

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

Cordelia

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

Gentleman

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

Doctor

Be by, good madam, when we do awake him; I doubt not of his temperance.

Cordelia Very well. Doctor Please you, draw near. Louder the music there! Cordelia

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

Kent

Kind and dear princess!

Cordelia

Had you not been their father, these white flakes Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face To be opposed against the warring winds? To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder? In the most terrible and nimble stroke Of quick, cross lightning? to watch—poor perdu!— With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog, Though he had bit me, should have stood that night Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father, To hovel thee with swine, and rogues forlorn, In short and musty straw? Alack, alack! 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him.

Doctor Madam, do you; 'tis fittest. Cordelia How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty? King Lear

You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave: Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears Do scald like moulten lead.

Cordelia Sir, do you know me? King Lear You are a spirit, I know: when did you die? Cordelia Still, still, far wide! Doctor He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile. King Lear

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight? I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity, To see another thus. I know not what to say. 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 but Kent and Gentleman.

Gentleman Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain? Kent Most certain, sir. Gentleman Who is conductor of his people? Kent As ’tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester. Gentleman They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany. Kent Report is changeable. ’Tis time to look about; the powers of the kingdom approach apace. Gentleman The arbitrement is like to be 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.

Act V

Scene I

The British camp, near Dover.

Enter, with drum and colours, Edmund, Regan, Gentlemen, and Soldiers. Edmund

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

Regan Our sister’s man is certainly miscarried. Edmund ’Tis to be doubted, madam. Regan

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

Edmund In honour’d love. Regan

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

Edmund That thought abuses you. Regan

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

Edmund No, by mine honour, madam. Regan

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

Edmund

Fear me not: She and the duke her husband!

Enter, with drum and colours, Albany, Goneril, and Soldiers. Goneril

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

Albany

Our very loving sister, well be-met. Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter, With others whom the rigor of our state Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest, I never yet was valiant: for this business, It toucheth us, as France invades

our land, Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear, Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

Edmund Sir, you speak nobly. Regan Why is this reason'd? Goneril

Combine together 'gainst the enemy; For these domestic and particular broils Are not the question here.

Albany

Let's then determine With the ancient of war on our proceedings.

Edmund I shall attend you presently at your tent. Regan Sister, you'll go with us? Goneril No. Regan 'Tis most convenient; pray you, go with us. Goneril Aside. O, ho, I know the riddle.—I will go. As they are going out, enter Edgar disguised. Edgar

If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor, Hear me one word.

Albany I'll overtake you. Speak. Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar. Edgar

Before you fight the battle, ope this letter. If you have victory, let the trumpet sound For him that brought it: wretched though I seem, I can produce a champion that will prove What is avouched there. If you miscarry, Your business of the world hath so an end, And machination ceases. Fortune love you.

Albany Stay till I have read the letter. Edgar

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

Albany Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook thy paper. Exit Edgar. Reenter Edmund. Edmund

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

Albany We will greet the time. Exit. Edmund

To both these sisters have I sworn my love; Each jealous of the other, as the stung Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take? Both? one? or neither? Neither can be

enjoy'd, If both remain alive: to take the widow Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril; And hardly shall I carry out my side, Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use His countenance for the battle; which being done, Let her who would be rid of him devise His speedy taking off. As for the mercy Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia, The battle done, and they within our power, Shall never see his pardon; for my state Stands on me to defend, not to debate. Exit.

Scene II

A field between the two camps.

Alarum within. Enter, with drum and colours, King Lear, Cordelia, and Soldiers, over the stage; and exeunt. Enter Edgar and Gloucester. Edgar

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.

Gloucester Grace go with you, sir! Exit Edgar. Alarum and retreat within. Reenter Edgar. Edgar

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

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

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

Gloucester And that's true too. Exeunt.

Scene III

The British camp near Dover.

Enter, in conquest, with drum and colours, Edmund, King Lear and Cordelia, prisoners; Captain, Soldiers, etc. 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

Come hither, captain; hark. Take thou this note; Giving a paper. go follow them to prison: One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way To noble fortunes: know thou this, that men Are as the time is: to be tender-minded Does not become a sword: thy great employment Will not bear question; either say thou’lt do ’t, Or thrive by other means.

Captain I’ll do ’t, my lord. Edmund

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

Captain

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

Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, another Captain, and Soldiers. Albany

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

Edmund

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

Albany

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

Regan

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

Goneril

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

Regan

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

Goneril That were the most, if he should husband you. Regan Jesters do oft prove prophets. Goneril

Holla, holla! That eye that told you so look’d but a-squint.

Regan

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

Goneril Mean you to enjoy him? Albany The let-alone lies not in your good will. Edmund Nor in thine, lord. Albany Half-blooded fellow, yes. Regan To Edmund. Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine. Albany

Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee On capital treason; and, in thine attaint, This gilded serpent Pointing to Goneril. For your claim, fair sister, I bar it in the interest of my wife: ’Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord, And I, her husband, contradict your bans. If you will marry, make your loves to me, My lady is bespoke.

Goneril An interlude! Albany

Thou art arm’d, Gloucester: let the trumpet sound: If none appear to prove upon thy head Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons, There is my pledge; Throwing down a glove. I’ll prove it on thy heart, Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less Than I have here proclaim’d thee.

Regan Sick, O, sick! Goneril Aside. If not, I’ll ne’er trust medicine. Edmund

There’s my exchange: Throwing down a glove. what in the world he is That names me traitor, villain-like he lies: Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach, On him, on you, who not? I will maintain My truth and honour firmly.

Albany A herald, ho! Edmund A herald, ho, a herald! Albany

Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers, All levied in my name, have in my name

Took their discharge.

Regan My sickness grows upon me. Albany She is not well; convey her to my tent. Exit Regan, led. Enter a Herald.

Come hither, herald—Let the trumpet sound, And read out this.

Captain 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 Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence.” Edmund Sound! First trumpet. Herald Again! Second trumpet. Herald Again! Third trumpet. Trumpet answers within. Enter Edgar, at the third sound, armed, with a trumpet before him. Albany

Ask him his purposes, why he appears Upon this call o’ the trumpet.

Herald

What are you? Your name, your quality? and why you answer This present summons?

Edgar

Know, my name is lost; By treason’s tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit: Yet am I noble as the adversary I come to cope.

Albany Which is that adversary? Edgar What’s he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester? Edmund Himself: what say’st thou to him? Edgar

Draw thy sword, That, if my speech offend a noble heart, Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine. Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours, My oath, and my profession: I protest, Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence, Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune, Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor; False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father; Conspirant ’gainst this high-illustrious prince; And, from the extremest upward of thy head To the descent and dust below thy foot, A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou “No,” This sword, this arm, and my

best spirits, are bent To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak, Thou liest.

Edmund

In wisdom I should ask thy name; But, since thy outside looks so fair and warlike, And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes, What safe and nicely I might well delay By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn: Back do I toss these treasons to thy head; With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart; Which, for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise, This sword of mine shall give them instant way, Where they shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak! Alarums. They fight. Edmund falls.

Albany Save him, save him! Goneril

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

Albany

Shut your mouth, dame, Or with this paper shall I stop it: Hold, sir: Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil: No tearing, lady: I perceive you know it. Gives the letter to Edmund.

Goneril

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

Albany

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

Goneril Ask me not what I know. Exit. Albany Go after her: she's desperate; govern her. Edmund

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

Edgar

Let's exchange charity. I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund; If more, the

more thou hast wrong’d me. My name is Edgar, and thy father’s son. The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices Make instruments to plague us: The dark and vicious place where thee he got Cost him his eyes.

Edmund

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

Albany

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

Edgar Worthy prince, I know’t. Albany

Where have you hid yourself? How have you known the miseries of your father?

Edgar

By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale; And when ’tis told, O, that my heart would burst! The bloody proclamation to escape, That follow’d me so near—O, our lives’ sweetness! That we the pain of death would hourly die Rather than die at once!—taught me to shift Into a madman’s rags; to assume a semblance That very dogs disdain’d: and in this habit Met I my father with his bleeding rings, Their precious stones new lost: became his guide, Led him, begg’d for him, saved him from despair; Never—O fault!—reveal’d myself unto him, Until some half-hour past, when I was arm’d: Not sure, though hoping, of this good success, I ask’d his blessing, and from first to last Told him my pilgrimage: but his flaw’d heart, Alack, too weak the conflict to support! ’Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief, Burst smilingly.

Edmund

This speech of yours hath moved me, And shall perchance do good: but speak you on; You look as you had something more to say.

Albany

If there be more, more woeful, hold it in; For I am almost ready to dissolve, Hearing of this.

Edgar

This would have seem’d a period To such as love not sorrow; but another, To amplify too much, would make much more, And top extremity. Whilst I was big in clamour came there in a man, Who, having seen me in my worst estate, Shunn’d my abhorr’d society; but then, finding Who ’twas that so endured, with his strong arms He fastened on my neck, and bellow’d out As he’d burst heaven; threw him on my father; Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him That ever ear received: which in recounting His grief grew puissant and the strings of life Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded, And there I left him tranced.

Albany But who was this? Edgar

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

Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife. Gentleman Help, help, O, help! Edgar What kind of help? Albany Speak, man. Edgar What means that bloody knife? Gentleman

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

Albany Who dead? speak, man. Gentleman

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

Edmund

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

Edgar Here comes Kent. Albany

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

Enter Kent. Albany

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

Kent

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

Albany

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

The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in. Kent Alack, why thus? Edmund

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

Albany Even so. Cover their faces. Edmund

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

Albany Run, run, O, run! Edgar

To who, my lord? Who hath the office? send Thy token of reprieve.

Edmund

Well thought on: take my sword, Give it the captain.

Albany Haste thee, for thy life. Exit Edgar. Edmund

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

Albany The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile. Edmund is borne off. Reenter 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’ld 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.

Colophon

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Dramatis Personae

Lear, king of Britain

King of France

Duke of Burgundy

Duke of Cornwall

Duke of Albany

Earl of Kent

Earl of Gloucester

Edgar, son to Gloucester

Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester

Curan, a courtier

Old Man, tenant to Gloucester

Doctor

Fool

Oswald, steward to Goneril

A Captain employed by Edmund

Gentleman attendant on Cordelia

A Herald

Servants to Cornwall

Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, daughters to Lear

Knights of Lear’s train, Captains, Messengers, Soldiers, and Attendants

Scene: Britain

King Lear

Imprint

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